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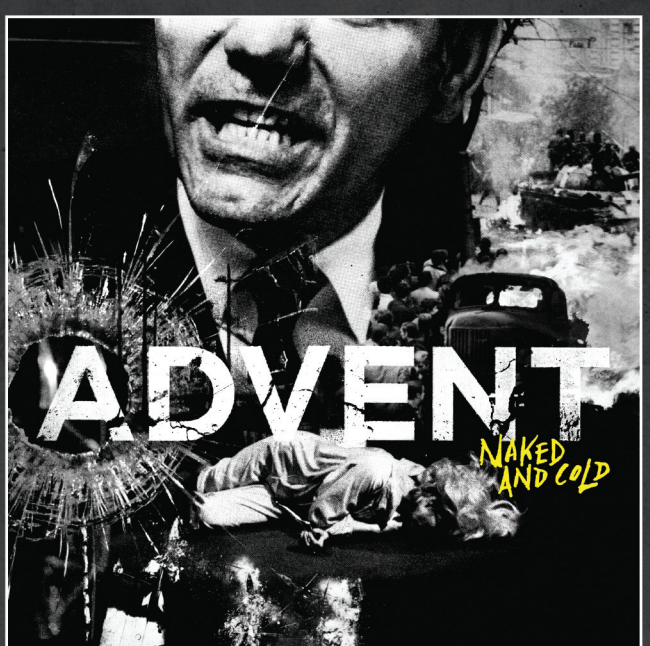

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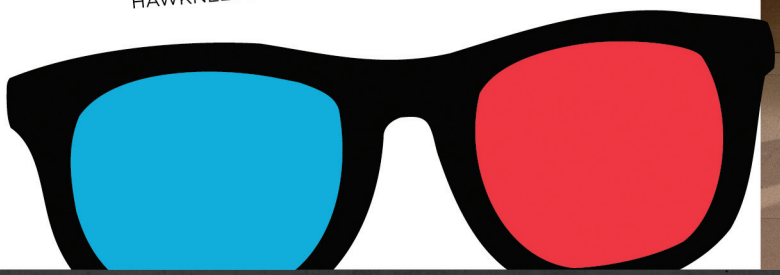

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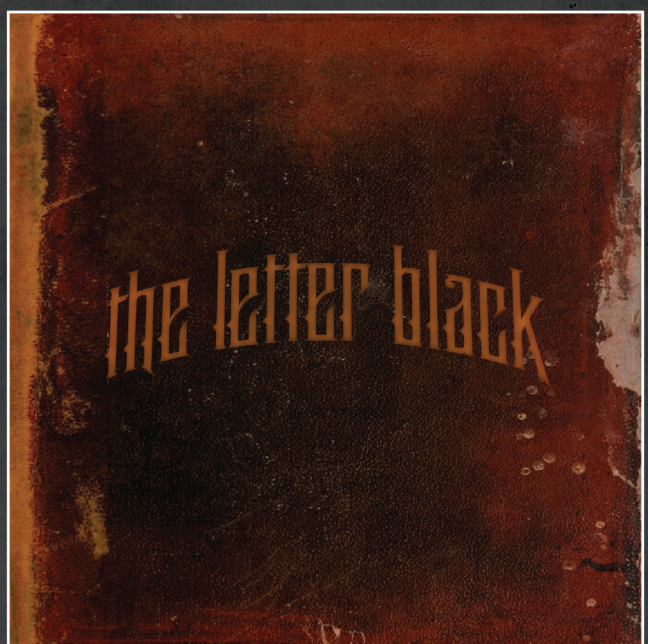

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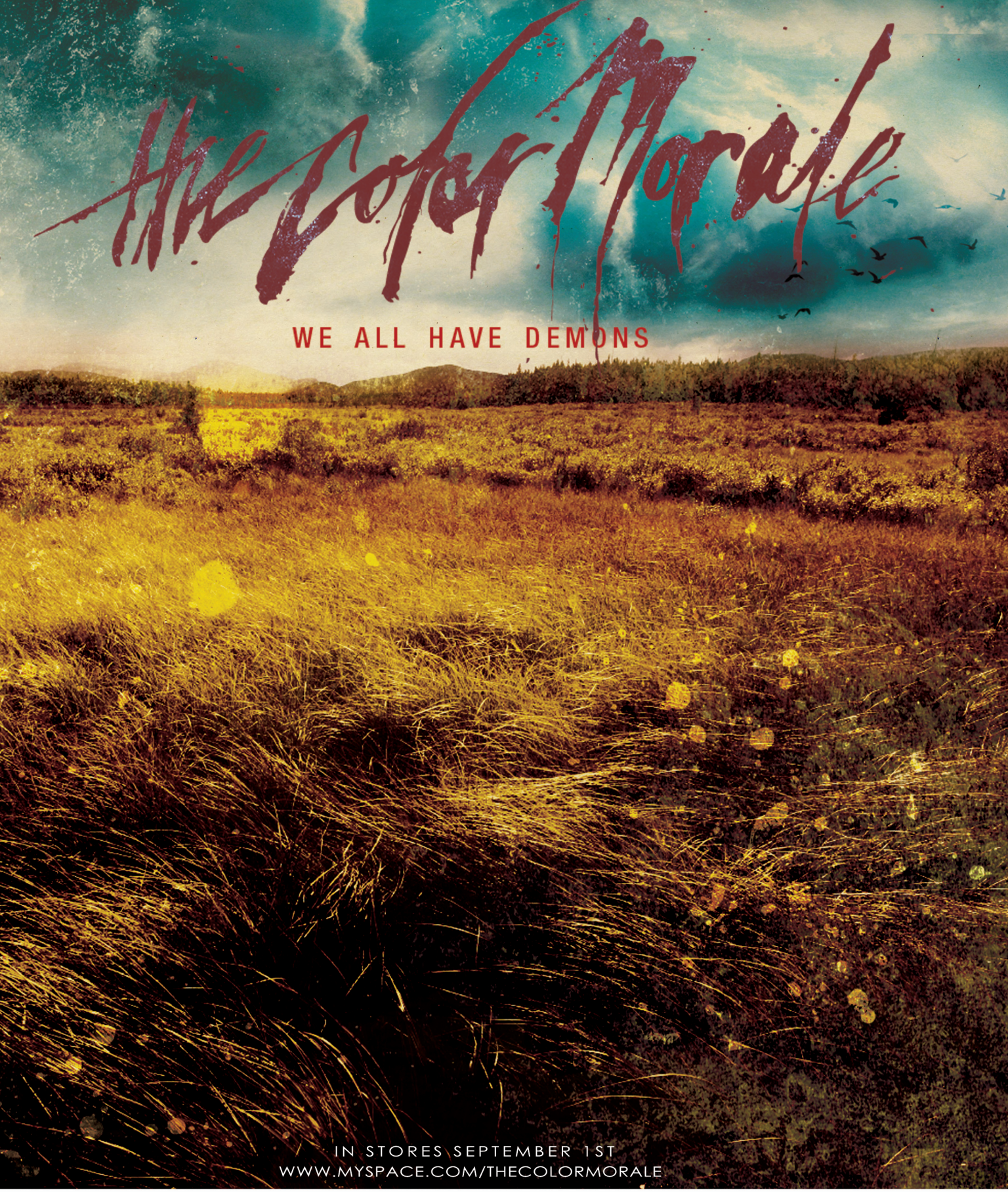

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From the editor

Doug Van Pelt

MORE HARD IMPROVEMENTS

HM Magazine has been bringing the hard news on a weekly basis (and even sending text messages of really hot late-breaking news) for half a decade or more now; and we figured it was time to do something different with the five pages we had been devoting to news in the print edition. We trust that most of you are getting your news on the internet and (thus) the news "bullets" you've been reading here lately are already old. Instead of continuing to do what we've been doing for the sake of it, we thought we'd use these pages more effectively – for introducing you to the hottest new bands we can find. So, please sign up for the HM e-mailing list if you haven't done so already, which can simply be done by going to hmmag.com and typing in your email address in the sign-up field and hitting the "submit" button.

And speaking of the HMmag.com website... We're very happy to introduce a complete new re-design of that thing. Hopefully, you'll find this new upgrade, faster, friendlier, and just plain more pleasing to the eyes. Kudos to Kevan Lee, the webmaster! Don't forget to download and use our custom HM browser, too.

If you're like me, you love to interact with like-minded people. That's what I love the most about twitter.com/dooglar (follow me as I follow good music) – it allows instant feedback on stuff that's going on, like live music. If you're curious about the whole thing, take a tip from me: Don't just use twitter on your computer, but set up your phone/mobile device with it. The fun quotient goes up exponentially. Trust me! And while we're on the subject of cell phones, I've started sending out some of the cooler, more time-sensitive "hot" news to the 125+ folks that've signed up for our free Mobile Alert "Late Breaking News" list. I only send the texts out when it's worthy and I'll never give your number to another (cuz we hate spam, too). If you'd like to try that out, send an email with your mobile # and service provider name to news@hmmag.com. We don't charge anything for it, but if your text plan is limited, watch out (normal text charges apply)!

Special thanks to our interns this summer, Corey and Kelly, who have contributed greatly and put up with a lot (like skunks and slow internet service)!

SPINNING AT HM NOW

I WAS A KING	*S/T*	Fun Larry Norman cover: "Hard Luck Bad News"
COLD TRUTH	*Do Whatcha Do*	Wonderful melodic blues a la Riverdogs.
NATIVE WINDOW	*S/T*	Current members of Kansas sans Walsh.
STARS GO DIM	*Love Gone Mad*	Fun hard rock a la Train. Darn good, too!
STAVESACRE	*Against The Silence*	Five songs that satisfy.
THE AWAKENING	*Tales of Absolution...*	Dark, gothic and doomy. Just like I like it!
MIKE CRAWFORD...	*...Even the Darkness...*	Wow. Such a diverse yet smooth ride.

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HARDNEWS
Quick & concise

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HM Magazine and Love is Concrete will give you access to new music, books and literature and a chance to pick the brains of your favorite (band, author, artist, provocateur). HM Blast Concrete is a weekly email newsletter that comes to you hot off the press and allows you to engage with the community around you in concrete ways. It's also an online community that connects you to the artists, authors and your friends. Talk, discuss and engage with HM and the world around you. Besides music and books, we're talking: funny, interesting, weird and bizarre videos; chances to support and learn a bit more about ways to make a difference. Resources for pastors, churches, leaders, secret agents and laymen. Inspirations, calls to action, challenges and information on how to optimize your mission. See ad this issue for details.

HUNTINGTONS FUND-RAISER
NEW CD RAISES FUNDS FOR MIKEE'S WIFE

Huntingtons put together a new album, *Punk Sounds,* on Knowhere Records to help raise awareness for a reunion / benefit show and to raise money on its own for Mikee Huntington's wife. Mikee Pierce (surprise, his real last name)'s wife, Jennie, has stage 3 brain cancer and all proceeds from the album will go to the family. The reunion show in Philadelphia on June 13th also included a reunited Ghoti Hook. You can purchase the album and/or make donations via PayPal at mikeehuntington@msn.com

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Boarders For Christ head out on massive tour

HM Magazine is also excited to announce that we've partnered together with the multi-ministry organization, Reach Your City (ReachYourCity.com). This fall one of those ministries – Boarders for Christ (boardersforchrist.com) – is launching *The Good Tour*. Featuring professional and amateur riders based out of the West Coast that have been bringing creative demos and outreaches to communities across the United States since 1997. This Fall, BFC will be heading from West Coast to East Coast and back with four boarders and their traveling skate park. The tour culminates with the Skate '09 Conference in Fort Lauderdale, FL on Oct. 22-24 (skateconference.com). So far, dates include stops in: Calif, Nev, Oregon, Wash, Idaho, Neb, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, Kentucky, Tenn, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Montana, Wyoming and South Dakota. "When we go to a demo in a community and they hear about *The Good Tour,* we're just preaching that God is good and it's something people need to know and need to hear right now." –Zach Black, BFC Member

News bullets

HM Magazine has been collecting the best "bullets" of news from our weekly enewsletters and "News Updates" on our website for the print edition. If you really crave fresh, up-to-date news from HM, then sign up for the HM e-mailing list at hmmag.com.

Hawk Nelson has committed to obtaining 5,000 pairs of shoes for children in need with TOMS Shoes. To help them reach their goal for children in Haiti, Hawk Nelson hosted six in-store "Style Your Sole" events with TOMS Shoes in July while in local areas for concerts.

Philmont joined forces with Steelroots for a new original series of webisodes featuring the Charlotte-based rock band. The webisodes reveal what happens during a day in the life of a touring band. "We only work 20 minutes out of the day, so there is a whole lot of downtime," laughs singer/guitarist **Scott Taube**.

Before There Was Rosalyn recently went into the studio with Brian Hood (MyChildren MyBride) and recorded three songs. Two of the songs feature **Dallas Taylor** on vocals. The band will go into the studio this summer to record a new full-length album.

Heaven's Force, the earliest known Christian thrash metal band, released their two demos as a limited-edition digipak on July 21st via Open Grave Records under the title *Aggressive Angel*. Heaven's Force was based out of Fort Worth, TX. They recorded two demos, the first being titled *Aggressive Angel*, which was self-released in 1983. The second demo would come a year later under the title *Heaven's Force*. Heaven's Force was collaboration between **David Gryder**, **Chris Richie** and **Kelly Berger**. David Gryder would later go on to help form the influential thrash band Rotting Corpse with **John Perez** (**Solitude Aeturnus**).

Specialty clothing line Malus Clothing has released a collaboration t-shirt with metal all-stars **As I Lay Dying**, themed on the band's last album, *An Ocean Between Us*. The shirt is available currently for a one-time-only run on Malus's website.

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Photo: Cal Knapp

Memphis May Fire

BY COREY ERB

Memphis May Fire has emerged from a lengthy search for a new lead singer with an arsenal of gritty southern rock in the form of *Sleepwalking*. After the band – from Texas, not Tennessee – made their choice in singer Matt Mullins, events unfolded quickly.

"Go back like a year or a little more," Mullins recounts. "Basically, Memphis May Fire was in the studio with (producer) Casey Bates in Seattle, and there's a few things that happened that caused Chase (Ryan, ex-vocalist) to leave the band, so they were forced to leave the studio and go home. They did, like, 82 auditions and hadn't found the right person and they heard through the grapevine about me and they e-mailed me. From there everything went real fast. It just kind of worked out. We clicked real fast."

Mullins evidently had a good amount of inspiration bottled up, because he only had two weeks to write the lyrics for the already-completed instrumental tracks, written primarily by guitarist Kellen McGregor, before entering the studio. "I have a lot to say," Mullins states plainly. Even during a scathing critique of greed in America or a call-out of current musicians being handed opportunities without working for them, there is an underlying hope and spirituality present in the lyrics.

"This record really offers hope and change and it's a wakeup call if you will," says Mullins. "We do music with a much greater purpose than just doing shows and going to parties and hanging out. If we could inspire some people and change some lives in the process, then that's cool."

Fans from the Chase Ryan era may have to get used to Mullins' vocal style. But there is something unique about how he varies the pace of his screamed vocals in just the right parts of songs, while mixing in clean vocals to tell each story accessibly. Bottom line: the final product shares the frenetic pace of the events that transpired leading up to its creation.

"We definitely wanted this record to be real driving – that's what kids fed off of on the (self-titled) EP," Mullins says. "We wanted to make a record you could listen to when you're working out or when you're driving or hanging out with friends and we wanted to keep the energy going with this record, but it's also a lot more melodic."

FREE DOWNLOAD

MEMPHIS MAY FIRE

The song "North Atlantic vs. North Carolina" from the upcoming Trustkill album, *Sleepwalking*, is yours free when you sign up for HM's free mobile "Late Breaking News" text-messaging service or the free email list. Send an email w/ your mobile # and the name of your service provider to **news@hmmag.com** [YOU CAN CANCEL EITHER AT ANY TIME. YOUR NORMAL TEXT CHARGES APPLY.]

Sancrosanct Records welcomes **Bloodlined Calligraphy** to its family of artists. The band is currently working on the material that will become their 2010 release with the combination of brutally fast-paced riffs and floor-shaking breakdowns that fans have become accustomed to in their previous offerings.

Christian Metal Fellowship is working to release its second compilation album for several underground metal bands. A tentative tracklisting includes songs by **Monotheist**, **In Grief**, **Dark Lay Still**, **Gondolin**, **Nephesh** and many others.

Mae have announced the release of the second installment their EP trilogy for 2009. Mae has committed to offering 100% of the proceeds from digital sales of the trilogy – *(M)orning, (A)fternoon and (E)vening* – to fund humanitarian and charitable projects. Each month Mae is offering a new song as a digital download; all songs can be purchased for a minimum donation of $1.00 each. "We're excited to team up with the Donors Choose organization, which helps educators around the country get the materials they need to effectively execute their curriculum," explains lead singer **Dave Elkins**.

Downhere is scheduled to release their first full-length holiday album, *How Many Kings: Songs For Christmas*, on October 6th. The new self-produced project features the timeless classics of the Yuletide season. "We made a giant list of Christmas songs and narrowed them down to our top choices, realizing that every one of them was at least 100 years old," says lead singer **Marc Martel**. "We all really resonate with a love for good lyrics, the classic ones that are going to last, so we do a lot of really old Christmas carols. However, we also tried to make the old stuff sound new."

As Cities Burn has broken up. "We're happily moving on after six good years. Our lives and our wives have called us in different directions. Thanks to anyone who has come out to a show, had words to say, or bought a CD to help us fill the tank."

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HARDNEWS
Page twelve

QUESTIONS *i want to ask*

BY DOUG VAN PELT

Whenever I witness some real revival-type activity, like God moving His people at a show by bands like For Today or Sleeping Giant, I am always excited and curious. I'm curious what the people do that somehow seems to come up with a welcomed invitation for God show up. I don't believe in formulas, per se, that we can use like witchcraft to conjure the Holy Spirit based upon our whims (the very idea is preposterous), but I'd like to know what these bands do or make sure they don't do in order to keep the invitation for God to come and work open and regular…and not go away.

What are some things that you guys have done… Not to put God in a box or say that He acts by formula, but what are some of the things that you do to prepare for your shows and what are some of the things that you would never want to stop doing for fear of losing God's special touch?
Mattie Montgomery: "Reading the Bible," he says, almost before the question finishes leaving this interviewer's mouth. "That's first and foremost. The Bible is called the Bread of Life and what good would my physical body be if I never ate? And so, the same concept: 'What good is my spiritual body if I never eat my spiritual food?' Just spending time listening. I grew up thinking, 'I'm going to go pray,' and I would sit down for a minute and say, 'Dear Jesus, here's my laundry list of things I want you to do. Amen.' And that's it. I wouldn't spend time just inviting God to come and speak to me. I think that is the whole basis of prayer. First asking, 'God, what are You doing? What are You doing in this world? What do You want to do through me and how are You wanting to do it? And how can I be a part of it?' And then volunteering everything you have. Sacrificing everything you have just to be involved in this incredible scheme of God's to save the world.

What do you think is the balance between being a sinner and being a saint?
I believe that what God says is true. I think that when God says, 'Let there be light,' then there will be light. And when God says to a valley of dry bones to arise, they're gonna get up and do it. When God says that anyone that believes in Jesus, they will have eternal life, that means that it's true. And when God said, that in Him – through faith in Him – we can approach the throne with freedom and confidence, I believe that's true. And so, as much as by the world's standards and even by the standard of my own memory, I'm a sinner, by the standard of God's Word, I'm a saint. And so I can walk as one, because God said it. And what God says is always true.

News bullets

For Today is heading out on tour with Emmure, Stick To Your Guns, Evergreen Terrace and Oceano for the *Hard Knock Life Tour* this fall. The band will also be jumping over to Australia for a week's worth of tour dates there.

Seabird will return to the studio this fall for its sophomore release, in stores December 2009. It'll feature production by Paul Moak (Mat Kearney, Sixpence None The Richer) and Matt Hales from Aqualung. Seabird will debut music from its forthcoming record on a tour with David Crowder Band beginning Oct. 1 in San Antonio. "I've never been as excited to be back in the studio as I am right now, says Seabird frontman **Aaron Morgan**. "To be honest, I was a little worried that we wouldn't find songs that were as exciting as our debut album. I now believe with everything in me that this record is a natural progression to a more moving experience than anything we've recorded to date."

David Crowder Band release its fifth studio album on September 22, the ambient and ethereal *Church Music* on sixstepsrecords/Sparrow Records.

August Burns Red have debuted the video for "Meddler," on the band's MySpace page.

Family Force 5 go out on their own *Dance Rawr Dance 3 Tour*. Starting in mid-September, the band will set out on the road with support acts, Breathe Carolina, Cash Cash, Queens Club and iRival.

Skillet's new *Awake and Alive Tour* will stretch from September to December.

The Glorious Unseen has just completed recording their sophomore album on BEC Recordings, *The Hope that Lies in You*, releasing on August 25th.

Eric Collins (**Denison Marrs** / **The Dark Romantics**) has been working on a new solo project which he is calling, *Mrenc*. The indie pop sound is akin to Spoon, Peter Bjorn & John, Cold War Kids, etc. [myspace/mrenc]

LIVE REPORT

Cornerstone Festival 2009

June 29 - July 4

BY DOUG VAN PELT

BUSHNELL, IL – Some people have rightly complained about outdoor festivals being like a survival test of the elements. Past fest-goers have battled heat and dust or mud. This year's Cornerstone Festival, though, felt like an indoor event with the air conditioning on the whole time. It was lovely ... that is, until the rain of the final day, but five out of six ain't bad.

Monday afternoon had several generator stages going at full blast, beginning an outdoor entertainment district that's a wonderful, but sometimes lacking quality free-for-all for DIY bands wanting to be heard. Tuesday saw several bands showcasing as part of the "Reignite" all-day showcase of indie bands. **Los Lonely Boys** played a laid-back and seasoned set of blues-soaked tunes that showed off their universal appeal. By the time the festival officially started, over a hundred performances had already taken place.

It was cool to hear **Owl City**'s strong pop hooks and see how two guys with Apple notebooks and keyboards can fill a tent so wonderfully. **Relient K** finished off the Mainstage on Wednesday, wrapping up with the epic "Deathbed." **The Showdown**, **Spoken**, **Showbread** and **The Blue Letter** all rocked the HM Magazine Stage with love and volume.

A couple of the strongest highlights of the fest had two things in common – vocalist **Mark Salomon** and guitarist and then bassist **Jeff Bellew**. **Stavesacre** played a joyous set on Thursday that covered all the band's hits (like "Minuteman," "Sand Dollar" and "Gold and Silver," and closing with "At the Moment"), as well as a couple new ones from their *Against The Silence* EP. After reading Mark's book, *Simplicity*, and getting insight into all his tormented lyrics, his song introductions this night and his uncharacteristically smiling face and steam rising from his bald head played out like a high definition drama of a great band seemingly playing just for the fun of it. Seeing so many shows of theirs in the past and noting how good they were when Mark was mad about something, it would make sense to worry that this would produce a downturn of performance quality. No worries here. They sounded amazing, tight, and driven. **The Crucified** played an evening encore on the following night, and it was a fantastic display of raw power and energy. Not only was this a band reuniting after over a decade, but they were performing so tight and fast that it was a sight to behold. Drummer **Jim Chaffin**, of course, provided a super solid low end, but **Greg Minier**'s guitar playing was both clean, dirty and his wah-wah effects showed great feeling. Of course, songs like "The Crucial Moment," "Your Image," "Mindbender" and "The Power of God" were mesmerizing and a rallying point for gang vocals and really good memories. It's hard to think of such an intense performance as "nostalgic," and that's probably due to this music being more like a super-caffeinated energy drink than some dull but fine wine.

A jillion other heartfelt performances took place, but a small smattering of hightlights would also include: the fun and goofy times on stage with **Austrian Death Machine**; the raw, thunderous metal power of **Oh, Sleeper** and **Becoming The Archetype**; the "Battle of the Alamo" (complete with forts) in the crowd at the **Flatfoot 56** show, which reportedly took out a tent pole; **Living Sacrifice** (who, along with **War of Ages**, **The Devil Wears Prada** and **Underoath** all played under tents rather than the rained-out mud bowl of Mainstage on Saturday); the frenzied preaching at **For Today** and **Sleeping Giant**; and a piano rock band called **Eastern Block**. It was exciting to see **Brian "Head" Welch** play on the main stage, who held his own with his riff-heavy "scary-core." **Shiny Toy Guns** was another anticipated act, which shone brightly in tunes like the self-censored "Le Disko," "You Are the One" and "Don't Cry Out," but didn't seem too comfortable on the big stage. Next year, when you deliberate making the trip: just go.

Clockwise from top: The Crucified in mid-riff; Brian "Head" Welch (photo by Travis Harris); Stavesacre; Owl City; Jim Chaffin. [Photos by Doug Van Pelt]

SUPERDRAG

AMERICA IS PRIVILEGED TO SPEND HER BLOOD AND HER MIGHT FOR THE PRINCIPLES
THAT GAVE HER BIRTH AND HAPPINESS AND THE PEACE WHICH SHE HAS TREASURED

BY DOUG VAN PELT

Superdrag is loved by its fans.

I took a walk with the band's singer, John Davis, through the streets of Austin during South By Southwest. We needed to find a quiet place to talk and record what he was saying. As a waiter showed us to a seat in the corner of Brick Oven Pizza, he turned to Davis and asked, "Superdrag, right?" and then he shared how much he liked the band. It's incredible how a band that never went Gold or Platinum can command such recognition and appreciation, but these good ole boys from Knoxville, TN do just that. If there could ever be such a thing as "Indie Rock Superstars," it'd be these guys.

It's nothing new for an artist to proclaim that their latest is the one they're most proud of, and Davis can be added to that number. "You know," he demurely states, "I've made five full-length records now with Superdrag, a bunch of EPs and singles, a lot of recordings and these couple of solo records... I think you just become more effective at communicating. In case you hadn't heard, he had a dramatic conversion from full-blown, killing-himself-with-liquor alcoholic to serious and joyful believer. He quit Superdrag and recorded a solo album for a Word-distributed Christian label, Rambler Records, in 2005. He left behind his so-called "secular" career, did the *700 Club*, shared his testimony and all that. The formula, if there is one, is to forever stay on this track, forsaking the world and its music scene. But that's not how Davis decided to go.

"I spent a lot of time thinking about how to bring it back. I missed it. All the songs I was writing sounded a lot like Superdrag. There was bitter feelings when I just walked in one day and said, 'Dudes, I can't do this any more.' My friend put ten years of his life into this, too. I missed the guys. At the same time, I had all these tunes and I really wanted to hear those guys play 'em.

"It was remarkable how easy it was to get the music together again. We had so much fun playing. The gigs were so well-received. There was such an outpouring of love from people. It was unreal, man. It was more than I had any right to expect. There were way more people than I realized waiting to see it. It's not like a global empire, like Aerosmith. What we do have, we're very grateful for. They're just nuts! Some guy flew from Hong Kong to see one of the reunion shows. I can't explain it.

"There's a couple of old songs that are off the table, still. I don't want to hear them again. There's a song called 'Anne T. Christ.' It's about a girl, but it's not a pun I care to make again. It's reverence. Superdrag fans will live if we don't play that song." Judging by their reaction at shows, he's right. "I was amazed by all the fans that gave me a fair shake, regardless. If they trusted me in 1998 to tell 'em what I really thought, they trust me now."

The level-headed excitement Davis feels nowadays is evident when he talks about how he was able "to make a Superdrag record that honors Him, instead of defying Him and acting like I can live without Him. That's why I'm most proud of it, because it gives honor to Whom it's most due."

After we leave the restaurant, a good half-hour longer than we both planned, we head across town on foot, passing one live music club after another. A guy and a girl are running (sprinting) towards us from three blocks away, shouting: "Superdrag! (huff, puff) Superdrag!" We stop and turn around as two twenty-somethings bound down the sidewalk to talk to Davis about getting into the private party they're playing at later on that night, to which he obliges. If I didn't believe it then, I certainly do now. People love these guys.

THIEVES & LIARS
AMERICAN ROCK 'N' ROLL

THE NEW ALBUM FROM THIEVES & LIARS "AMERICAN ROCK 'N' ROLL" OUT SEPTEMBER 1ST!

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ABEL
THE HONEST LOVE

THEIR DREAMT MUSIC DEBUT "THE HONEST LOVE" AVAILABLE SEPTEMBER 1ST

WATCHTOARTISTS

Abandon Kansas

The moniker feels appropriate with Abandon Kansas. A new label deal with Gotee Records brings them from the Sunflower State to the national scene, while a new album, *We're All Going Somewhere*, produced by Mark Townsend (Relient K, Deas Vail), affirms the first half. On the new disc, frontman Jeremy Spring explains the quartet's move from younger poppy tendencies to a more mature indie rock style.

"With the music on this new record, we're listening to a lot of new stuff for us – a lot of Kings of Leon, Manchester Orchestra, the new Killers record and a lot of Muse. Before it was lot of *CCM Magazine* stuff and *AP Magazine* stuff – high school teenie rock kind of stuff. We're trying to grow up and I think we are, slowly. Plus we don't have a big enough fanbase where it really matters if we change styles right now, so it's not like we're disappointing millions."

"Mark was amazing at pulling things out of us," Spring continues. "He spent as much time pushing the record button as he did sitting in a band preaching at us about what kind of band we are. He set us free from the whole pop thing and turned us loose as an indie band with some melodic, pop elements."

—Matt Conner

The Rocketboys

If you were one of the many at Cornerstone Festival two years ago, you might remember seeing or hearing about Homer Hiccolm and the Rocketboys. These are the same rocketboys, but only without the confusing reference to the DIY scientist and his backyard rocket building. The college friends formed in Abilene, TX in 2005, but moved to Austin, changed the moniker and have been consistently playing and recording.

Their brand new album *20000 Ghosts*: (hits September 29) continues the soft-spoken melodies and ambient sound bed. It was engineered and produced by Louie Lino (Nada Surf, Matt Pond PA), mastered by Alan Douches (Sufjan Stevens, Animal Collective) and features artwork from *Dark Was The Night* artist, Ryan Feerer. Describing the new album, guitarist Daniel Wheeler says it "displays a new range of diversity and maturity in our music, while maintaining the pop sensibility that fans have come to love. We try to find the balance between a light, drum-driven brand of indie rock and darker, more atmospheric sounds coupled with lyrics and melodies you can't get out of your head."

Stars Go Dim

It's questionable territory to call Stars Go Dim a new band. It's not debatable whether they'll blow up or not. The pop-focused quartet is composed of former rock band members, specifically of Pillar and Justifide, but the band's soft spot for major hooks comes through loud and clear on new release, *Love Gone Mad*. With a great fanbase already built and viral melodies set for any market that will listen, the four-piece should have no problem with a new identity. "A lot of fans carried over just because I did a lot of the street team work with Pillar, so I had a lot of friends there," says bassist Mike Wittig. "They were interested in what we're doing now, because me and Lester were a part of it. All the guys are Christians in the group and one of the guys is even a worship leader at a church here in Tulsa. But what we write about are a lot of love songs. A few of us are married and have kids, so it's a topic that relates to everybody – Christians and non-Christians."

—Matt Conner

Mike Crawford & His Secret Siblings

When we dreamed up this new section (Watch to Artists), this was the first artist that came to mind. My attention to this outfit was the result of a recommendation email from David Crowder, who never emails this magazine editor and recommends in very strong terms that we should check out this band ... until now.

Here's his email:
I stumbled across this church's CD that is mind-bending. People need to know this thing is out there. Seriously, it is ridiculous. ***It's as if the broken social scene were in charge of the music at a church.*** *The church is Jacob's Well in Kansas City, which you may have heard of. The Waterdeep folks were from there. The pastor's name is Tim Keel. The music guy is Mike Crawford. The title of the CD is: Mike Crawford and his Secret Siblings present Songs from Jacob's Well, Volumes I & II: Even the Darkness Will Not Be Dark To You, which should tell you something about what you're getting into. I just couldn't believe a church was putting out something so artistic and well done. You've got to see the packaging for this thing. Nuts! Anyway, I only have one copy but I'd be happy to send it to you... Well, I'd be sad, but still would (be) joyous to know you would get to see and hear this thing. But seriously, you've got to give this thing some ink. I guarantee your readers would be as thrilled as I am/was to find a church willing to go for something like this. It is epic!*

After reaching out to the church via their MySpace page, a copy was duly sent, which relieved the heck out of me, because I didn't want to see Crowder part with his only copy. Turns out the boasting is well-deserved. The double-disc comes in a quad-fold sleeve with cryptic fantasy art on every surface ... and sometimes that's all it takes to get the fascination wheels turning. Inside this "super prog double disc," as Mike likes to call it, are 17 songs that travel from concept album sound effects to multi-voice singing to chimimg, atmospheric guitars to sweeping, orchestral instrumentation. The rest of the subtitle reads: "Subversive Symphonies and Time-Tested Folk Remedies Sure To Aid in the Toppling of Evil Empires." The thoughtful and powerful statement lyrics inside indeed hold the prophetic power of transformation.

Add this album to your collection. You'll be glad you tried something new. And, after all, it comes with a guaranty from David Crowder!
—Doug Van Pelt

We Came As Romans

Sometimes a band on a secular label comes along and straight-up blows you away with its lyrical content. That's the case with Equal Vision's We Came As Romans. The angelic/demonic contrast of the high-register vocals and death growls gives the Detroit, MI sextet's music a beautiful schizophrenic sound, but it's the lyrical content that is most impressive here. Believers will notice Christian threads driving each song, and non-believers will appreciate the positive outlook without being turned away by blatantly biblical language. Guitarist Joshua Moore explains the band's aim to inspire with their forthcoming full-length, due in October.

"Faith is a huge part of We Came As Romans, but not always or exactly in the way that most people would think," says Moore. "When a majority of kids think of faith, the first thought is that it directly ties to religion and stops there; but to us, faith isn't a religious word. Yes, to some of us it definitely is a religious topic, but to all of us it's just about believing in other people and the 'good' in people. Everyone wants to be loved and when kids understand that, that's what we're here to show and try to get people to see."

Musically, the band's perfectionism, along with the production of Joey Sturgis (The Devil Wears Prada, Emarosa), makes for a tight, technical end product.

"After a song would be 'finished,'" continues Moore, "everyone would go through and listen and make sure every single part was something they'd want to listen to. Nothing that was 'filler' or just 'kinda cool.' Each part had to be something that was awesome to listen to."
—Corey Erb

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Templar

Album: *Dark Circus* | **Label**: Youngside Records | **Release Date**: August 11 in USA | **RIYL**: Killswitch Engage
Members: Dan Yohann – Guitars, Vox | Rafael – Bass, Synthesizers | Toad – Vox, Screaming | SyMon – Drums
Discography: *Witch Hunt* EP (2006) | *Preaching to the Perverted* (2008) | **Home**: Perth, Western Australia

In the Beginning: "Nov '06, Ralph and I ran into each other after many years at a Mortification concert and he was starting something new and I also wanted to."

Show Memories: "I played a show at a club, it was packed, we started playing and because we were a metal band, the sound guy thought we wanted it really, really loud so he turned it up. Three songs in, there wasn't anyone left, because people needed to get treatment for bleeding ears. Not our best gig."

One-Song Setlist: "'Dark Circus.' It really sums up the sound and attitude of the band and it rocks hard."

(Answers by Dan Yohann)

ROCK AND ROLL

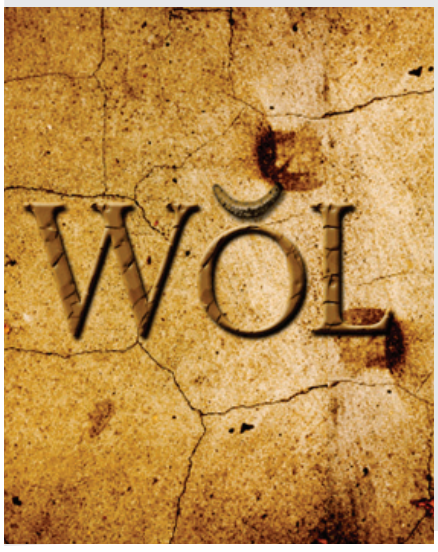
ABIDE

Album: *These Days* | **Release Date**: July 2
Members: Paul M. Toravie – Lead & Rhythm Guitars | Henry Lowa – Rhythm Guitar | Daniel Warbat – Bass | Anton Bobo – Drums | Nathan Lowa – Vocals & Harmonies

In the Beginning: "We initially started out in July 2004, just jamming around with my uncle's instruments, since he is a rock musician. We basically would play the heavy metal stuff and got opportunities to play in live shows from time to time. About two years after that we got to record our debut album in his studio."

Possibly Divine Deposit: "The passion or will to play the heavy music to glorify the Lord as well as be an encouragement to those in need of hope."

Without these Albums, We Wouldn't Exist as a Band: "Creed – *Human Clay*; Pillar – *Where Do We Go From Here?*; Van Halen – *1984*."



WoL

Album: *Self-Titled*

Description: "This project is about a war. A spiritual war that involves determination, persistence and sacrifice. WoL is not just a band or a certain type of music, but a Spirit; A Spirit of revolt and anger against all the negative spiritual influences in the world that try so desperately to destroy us. A sample of one of our (very metal) songs: 'Demons Be Gone,' demonstrates the reality of the negative forces we are talking about. What you hear is very controversial and should be listened to with a very open mind. When you get to the last part of the song, you'll understand what we mean. Please know that WoL is in no way interested in any kind of recognition or financial gain. All proceeds will be going back into the project in the hopes that many will be encouraged by its message. If you have any questions or comments or would like to speak to us further about any matter, especially if you or someone you know is struggling with unexplained, impossible problems, please contact us by clicking on our contact us at : info@wolmusik.com (or write PO Box 604, Harbor City, CA 90710-0604). Thanks for reading and many blessings to you."
–WoL

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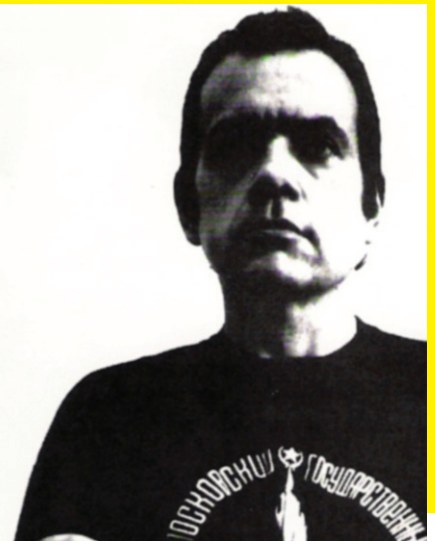

Steve Scott

Album: *Emotional Tourist* (retrospective) | **Label**: Arena Rock | **Release Date**: Early 2010 | **Home**: Sacramento
Discography: *Moving Pictures* (unfinished/unreleased, Solid Rock, '78) | *Love In The Western World* (Exit, '82) | *Lost Horizon* (Alternative, '89) | *Magnificent Obsession* (Alternative, '91) | *The Butterfly Effect* (Blonde Vinyl, '92) | *Empty Orchestra* (Glow, '93) | *We Dreamed That We Were Strangers* (Glow, '96) | *More Than A Dream* (Glow, '97) | *Crossing the Boundaries* (Glow, '98) | *Love in the Western World* (w/bonus tracks, M8, '00)
Poetry Books: *Ghost Dance* (Monolith, '76) | *AfterImages: Boundaries Vol. 1* ('91) | *The Saint Petersburg Fragments: Boundaries Vol. 2* (Cornerstone Press, '93) | *Out Of Order: Boundaries Vol. 3* (Inertia, '94)
Books on Art: *Crying for a Vision* (Stride, '91) | *Like A House on Fire* (Wipf and Stock, '03) | *Crying for a Vision* (expanded version, Alivingdog, '05)
One Conviction: "The Gospel of John is an important text to consider when thinking about Christian Art and culture(s)."
Without these Artists...: "The Beatles, Leonard Cohen, Gavin Bryars."
Emotions I'd Want Back (if taken away): "I'd like grief and joy back, please ... and maybe anger. Serenity would be good. Feeling the right things at the right time, and doing something (constructive) with or about them."
One Question for God: "How did something so simple end up so complicated?"
Further Info: alivingdog.com/SteveInt.html.

TOWN HALL

Benjiman

Album: *S.K.R.I.P.T.* (Spreading Kingdom Realities In Perilous Times) | **Label**: Save The City | **Release Date**: Oct. 6
RIYL: "I will never be able to beat the 'You sound like Toby Mac' comments from music fans, and honestly I love Toby, so that's cool. But I personally think my music is more like Gym Class Heroes or even group one crew."
Discography: *Activate* (BEC, 2005) | **Home**: Lacomb, Oregon
If not for music...: "I think I would be involved in one of two things ... either custom cars/motorcycles or the bicycle industry. I love both! I enjoy welding and modifying stuff, using my creativity to make ideas in my head reality.
In the Beginning: "December 12th, 1993 I decided to start performing. In 2005 I released my first record on BEC Recordings and brought on a back up band."
Without these Albums...: "Well first off, I decided I wanted to be a musician when I saw Petra's *On Fire Tour* in 1989 (shoot, I'm dating myself), then solidified my decision after listening to DC Talk and S.F.C., so I would say my three would be: Petra – *On Fire* | S.F.C. – *Listen Up* | DC Talk – *Free at Last*."
Albums I'd give@Christmas: "Anything from Matisyahu, because the man sings and writes w/such passion it is moving."
Best Video on YouTube: "Grandma and Grandpa Ghost Ride the Whip." Second place would be "Drama Chipmunk."
Show Memories: "For the first two or three years of my ministry satanic cults kept showing up at my concerts! It got so bad that I started knowing their names and faces."

Soul Scholar

Album: *Power To The People* | **Release Date**: June 1
RIYL: old Black Sabbath; Mountain; Led Zeppelin; The Kinks; King's X; Jimi Hendrix
Members: Mark (Egon) Hubbard – Lead Vocals, Lead Guitar, Rhythm Guitar | Donnie Hopper – Drums, Rhythm Guitar, Backing Vocals | Mark Whitbeck – Bass, Backing Vocals | **Home**: Detroit, MI
If there wasn't music, what skills would your members use and what would they do?
Donnie: "I might be a teacher or a truck driver, which is what I was anyway. Egon would probably be a child psychologist. Whitbeck puts his skills to use."
Mark: "I would be an filmmaker, electrician, robot programmer, or a web developer, probably. Or maybe I would work with acrylic paints or photography or something."
Egon: "Yeah, I would probably be a counselor or a photographer."
If you could ask God one question, what would you ask Him?
Donnie: "Where on Your green earth is the remote for the downstairs TV?"
Mark: "*Teletubbies*? For real?"
Egon: "That's two questions, Mark. Mine would be, why mosquitos?"

See full interviews with all artists at hmmag.com

The Christian & Art

WITH KEMPER CRABB

The Disconnect: Why Evangelicals Make Bad Art (Part the Eighteenth)

We've previously explored the question of why millions of American Evangelicals have failed to produce much quality art of any sort, and have seen that this is largely due to limited or distorted views of the Bible's teachings (or a failure to act on or consider the implications of what they do know from it), despite the fact that Scripture instructs believers in "every good work" (2 Tim. 3: 16-17), which includes the making of art.

We've seen some of the destructive implications of shallow or distorted views of the Doctrines of Creation and Eschatology. To misunderstand the implications of God's Creation of the world is to ultimately devalue the material world as the arena and plastic materiel of spirituality in history. To misunderstand biblical Eschatology (the doctrine of what God is shaping history toward, and of what His Purposes are to accomplish within and at the end of time) leads inevitably to a pessimism concerning history and its value, and seeing time as the domain of Satan, and therefore as only something to be escaped from, rather than something to be fulfilled and redeemed.

Then we turned to a consideration of the artistic deformation wrought by a sub-biblical perspective on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, seeing that a rejection or misunderstanding of the Three Persons of the One God destroys the possibility of any theological justification in seeing symbols as both carrying meanings simultaneously as well as unifying those multiple meanings.

We've also seen that the denigration of the Mystery of the Trinity is to minimize the reflected mystery in man who is made in the Image of God, reducing men to simplistic machines subject to quick-fix techniques.

We also saw that the Balance of Unity and Diversity, the One-and-Many Aspect of the Triune God, is the answer to the question every artist faces: which is more important, the artist's interior vision or the perception of the audience? The answer is the balance of the unity of the artist's vision with the diversity of the sundry perceptions of the audience, just as God's Unity and Diversity in Balance is intended to be reflected in Creation. A failure to see the Diversity which defines the Triune God as much as does His Unity leads to a view of man and the world which flattens both, reducing humanity to a uni-dimensional construct made for one mode of being, rather than inhabiting the nuanced, complex, multi-orbed Reality God prepared for mankind to reflect God in.

In the last issue, we saw illustrated the practical results of this theological defect by the story of a Christian record label's rejection of a song (which both a popular CCM artist and the artist's producer were pressing the label to allow them to include on a new project) not because the song was considered lacking lyrically or musically (in fact, the label thought the song was very good), but because the song lacked what they called "a happy ending," by which they meant a conclusion in which the song's narrator gets what he wants, rather than the thing God deems best for him.

This rejection betrays a belief that humans exist for only one mode of being: happiness (which is not the same thing as joy). This belief is shored up by a uni-dimensional view of mankind as the Image-bearer of the Complex Triune God.

This forces art by Christians into a singular promotion of a view of experiencing God as only wanting humans to be happy, rather than for humans to be holy, and of humans as those who should only experience happiness, instead of those who, in a fallen world, should also experience sorrow, repentance, and lamentation at their own sin and the sin around them, as well as sharing in the Suffering of Christ (I Peter 4: 12-19; 2 Cor. 7: 8-11).

Scripture, which overwhelmingly concerns itself with the relationship and experience of God with His Covenant People, reflects not only the experience of happiness and joy, but of sorrow, suffering, repentance, duty, malediction, and holy terror, as normative in the fallen world.

If Christian art does not accurately reflect the experience of Reality, which both believers and non-believers share, the Faith appears as an unrealistic, irrelevant belief fit only to be laughed at or angrily rejected by non-believers, and a source of disappointment and confusion to Christians who have not been taught a fully-orbed biblical view of the world. A return to what Scripture teaches concerning the Triune God and all that teaching implies is necessary to restore to the Church to a sound view of God, man, and the world, and to equip the Church to begin once again to produce meaningful art.

[kempercrabb.net]

The way I see it
Chris Wighaman

"When we honestly ask ourselves which person in our lives mean the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a warm and tender hand. The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is a friend who cares."
— Henri J.M. Nouwen (The Road to Daybreak)

Right now my best friend and wife Megan is sitting in the hospital with her mother. Her mom, seemingly out of nowhere, has lost all feeling and movement in her legs. There is a real fear that they will not work again. Her mom is active, young and a very kind person. She does not deserve this. Slowly, we are realizing just how little there is we can do. Megan has spent every day, all day, with her since we arrived a week ago. She feels helpless. Powerless. All she can do is pray and offer her love and presence to her mother.

The word compassion comes from two Latin roots: com (together) and pati (suffer, endure). Compassion is the willingness to suffer with someone as they endure circumstances that are too great for one person to bear. It is one of the least desirable ways we tend to deal with hard times in other people's lives. It's messy, depressing and asks so much – usually too much – of us. Far too often we are selfish and only worry about how this will all affect our lives. Honestly, I'd rather send flowers and say I prayed for them. Compassion is the example our God sets out for us. Look at the life of Christ. He entered into human existence to join us in our suffering. Psalm 145 says, "The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The LORD is good to all; He has compassion on all He has made." The LORD joins in the suffering of all. He desires to be with us as we travel through hard times. This is our example.

Are you compassionate? Do you see suffering and run the other way. Or are you willing to, like Christ did, enter into the difficult times with someone and just be there for him or her?

Devotions
with Greg Tucker

My eyes have seen all this, my ears have heard and understood it.
Job 13:1

A human ear consists of three basic parts – the outer, middle, and inner sections – and each plays a unique role in bringing sound to life. But the noise was not pleasant in 1995 when a young physician at Boston's Massachusetts General Hospital successfully grew a human ear on a mouse. Referred to as the Vacanti Mouse (after Dr. Joseph Vacanti), once images were released on the Internet, animal-rights activists shouted their objection.

The structure on the creature's back was actually a piece of crafted cartilage, so even though it appeared real – and pictures prove it did – there was never hope of sound getting through. This ear, by design, was deaf.

When God "knit man together," as it says in Psalm 139, His creation included two complex and delicately made ears so sound could make its way to the brain. But catching vibrations doesn't always mean getting the message. Recently that fact came to life when I recommended a particular song for a friend's football video. "Are you serious?" was the shocked response from everyone in the room. "Do you have any idea what that song is about?" Evidently I didn't.

The tune in question was a classic, delivered by one of the greatest bands in rock history, and I suspect it's been played on the radio hundreds of thousands of times. I've always liked it, always hummed the tune, and usually mumbled some of the words when they rolled around. But I had never actually listened.

Turns out the whole song is about "gallivanting," shall we say, with the girl next door, and the description is amazingly – almost impressively – graphic. The writer should consider a career in medicine. I was amazed that even the words I did know were dirty, once you put them in context. I felt like such a boob. (Pun intended.)

Satan knows that his seeds, once planted, will yield a garden of bad actions and wrong attitudes, eventually costing a man his very soul. Many Christians are too far along to give-in to major temptation, so the enemy is content whispering things – delightful tales of sin found in songs and jokes and everyday conversation – and he does it so quietly that a lazy listener never realizes he's being painted from the inside out.

Solomon laid out the best plan in Proverbs 4:1, when he directed us to not only listen, but pay attention as well. Shake your head and open your ears, for both sides of the spiritual battle are sending messages through the very sounds you hear.

[Greg Tucker is president of Tucker Signature Films. You can meet him at the HM Magazine booth at Revelation Generation Festival on September 4th and 5th]

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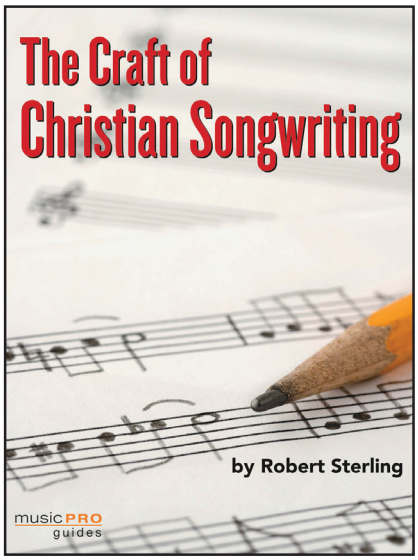

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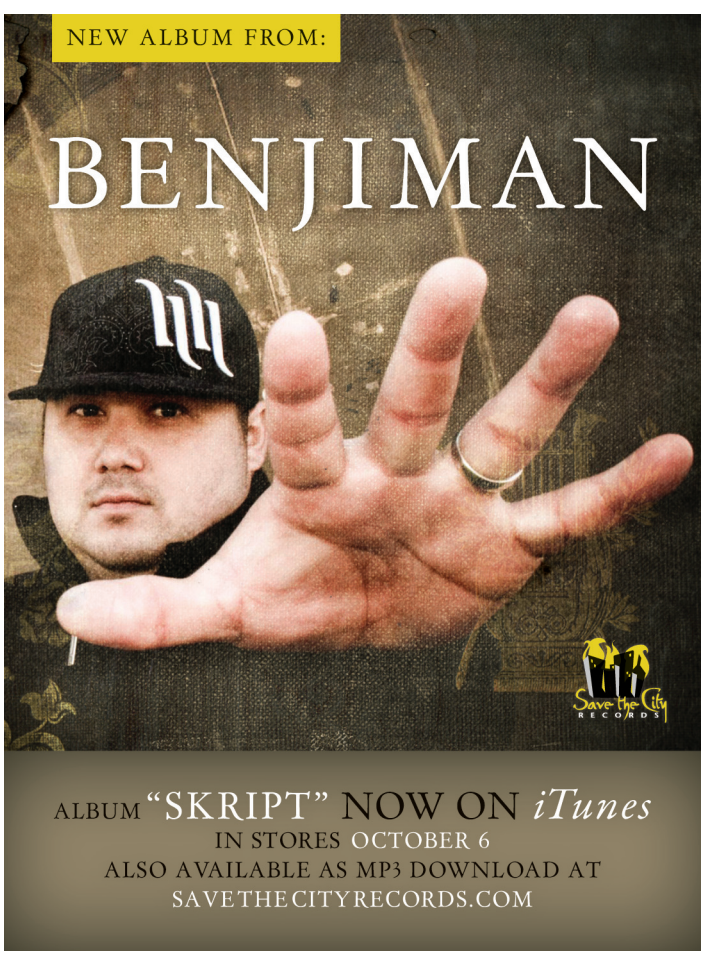
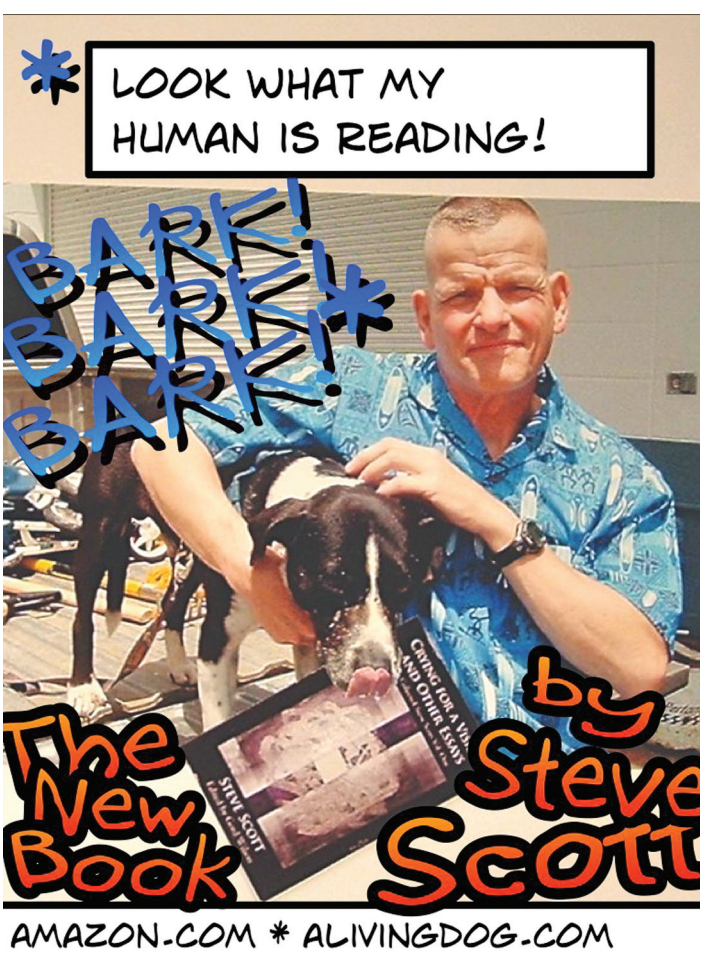
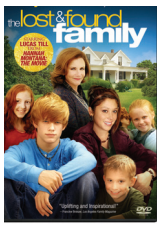




LIFEstyle

LORD, SAVE US FROM YOUR FOLLOWERS
This film should be required viewing for everyone. Nary a DVD was created that was so good at breaking my heart. At times funny, at times cringe-inducing, it's seemingly created by a heart that grieves over all this. It's well-crafted and not only good at pointing out the faults of the USA's evangeli-culture (the most notable of which is how blind we seem to be towards how we come off to others), but also offers practical solutions. [Zacchaeus Film Group] *Doug Van Pelt*
[Cuss: 0 | Gore: 0 | Sex: 0 | Spiritual Conversations: 100]

THE LOST & FOUND FAMILY
If you like sub-par acting with a redemptive God-centered plot, because it makes you cry (remembering that God loves people just like you), then this movie will do. [Sony Pictures] *DV*
[Cuss: 0 | Gore: 0 | Sex: 0 | Spiritual Conversations: 100]



THE TERRY SCHIAVO STORY
A beautiful, revealing, amazing and poignant documentary that goes deeper than any of the coverage seen on the news. As a documentary, it's put together so well that its 50 minutes flies by without notice. [Franklin Springs] *DV*
[Cuss: 0 | Gore: 0 | Sex: 0 | Spiritual Conversations: 100]

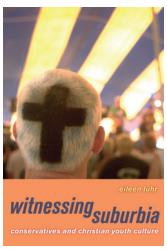
24 SEASON 7
Amidst a writer's strike, one of TV's most popular shows found a way to keep from becoming a parody of itself. They put Jack Baeur on trial for torturing suspects and then leaned on him to save the world one more time. Set in Africa and then Washington D.C., it wasn't the series' best moment, but it was darn good. [Fox Video] *DV*
[Cuss: 10 | Gore: 30 | Sex: 0 | Spiritual Conversations: 30]

FALLEN ANGEL: THE OUTLAW LARRY NORMAN
This documentary has been a long time in the making. The difficult task of telling the story about Christian rock pioneer Larry Norman was compounded during the singer's lifetime by his opposition to the film and its director (and only further complicated by Larry's death last year). While seeing our hero (a certifiable legend in Christian rock) in a less-than-positive light (especially after his death) is sure to freak-out a lot of fans. Thanks to plenty of grace and restraint by the director and one of the chief story-tellers (Randy Stonehill), it comes off much more balanced than, say, a hatchet job would. Larry is both honored and intensely examined by his peers and also an illegitimate child. Yeah, it's likely to be a controversial and divisive movie. [Jester Media] *DV*
[Cuss: 0 | Gore: 0 | Sex: 0 | Spiritual Conversations: 100]

T.55 USB
Buying records used to be considered an aging art form, but with the recent resurgence of all things retro, buying vinyl is considered a fine commodity once again. But what is the point of buying records when you can't put those songs on your computer or your iPod? Thus, the brilliant invention of the USB turntable. This record player has an outlet for a USB cable (which is included) to connect from the player to your computer. If you have Windows you then install software from an included CD, or with a Mac you download the audio editing and recording program Audacity, and you are all set. As you play the record, the program records it, and you then break it up into tracks. The quality may be ever-so-slightly lower than a CD, but not by much. If you have the funds to buy this record player, it would certainly be a good investment. [stantondj.com] *Kelly Kettering*
[Setup Ease: B- | Performance: A | Price: $199]

MIKEY
The Mikey iPod microphone recorder performs decently in lecture, interview and even certain live music settings, though it takes practice and patience to avoid clipping and achieve that clean, clear stereo sound you want.
[griffintechnology.com] *Corey Erb*
[Setup Ease: A- | Performance: C+ | Price: $79]

NAVIGATE
The premise is promising. Controlling your iPhone or iPod while working out or travelling, with the mp3 player tucked away in a pocket. The two-foot cord allows about the right amount of freedom and Navigate also adds FM radio with presets. Useful? Yes ... until someone comes out with a wireless wristband controller. Practical? Not so much. [griffintechnology.com] *DV*
[Setup Ease: A | Performance: B+ | Price: $59]



WITNESSING SUBURBIA | EILEEN LUHR
Assuming she doesn't already, Eileen Luhr should teach a history course called "The Political and Cultural Hypocrisies of Suburban White Conservative Evangelicals in the 20th Century." She's already written the textbook. *Witnessing Suburbia* recounts the suburban retreat of evangelicals, their varying opinions on popular culture and music as tools, and their integration with consumerism and politics. The book is exhaustive, complete with 758 endnotes taken from various sources ranging from music magazines (including this one) to historians. Chapter 3 is worth a read for its retelling of the early days of Christian heavy metal. Taken as a reminder of areas to improve, this book could serve to benefit those it criticizes, though it beleaguers the point a bit. [Univ. of Calif. Press] *CE*

throughout showbread's decade-plus career, change has been the constant. whether it's been in the band's sound from record to record or in the band's many lineup changes – more than 20 individuals have been involved with showbread either in concert or on recordings – showbread has always found a way to keep listeners from getting too comfortable. it's the same story with *the fear of god*. it all began during the long gap between recording *anorexia/nervosa* in august 2007 and its release in may 2008.

by corey erb

"As soon as we scratch the itch of the album that we just finished, the thing that we've been working on forever, and you finally get it out and hear it, we jump in another direction, like, 'Okay, what's next?' since we satisfied that urge," frontman Josh Dies explains. "We had a lot of time to be like, 'Oh well, what will we do?' and after that we had a couple of long-term members leave and it kind of left us in a good position in a sense that we had three core guys left over – three members who had been there for over a decade – and we had a drummer that we had been playing with for a while. We had wanted to do a record that was more stripped down and aggressive ever since *No Sir, Nihilism is Not Practical* and that was kind of the thing the four of us wanted to do with *Age of Reptiles*, but the other members that we had at the time really wanted to do something else, so we ended up compromising and settling somewhere in the middle. So when it was just the four of us, we were like, 'We have the opportunity to do this now, why don't we just try?'"

But before they could record, their drummer departed. Dies, his brother/bassist Patrick Porter and guitarist Mike Jensen were left searching for a replacement behind the kit.

"Having lineup changes sucks," Dies says. "Being a band that is faith-based and ministry-based, all our decisions are filtered through, 'Let's pray about this and see what we're supposed to do.' When we have lineup changes, we've had it happen for every reason from someone would be like, 'I really feel like God wants me to do something else and I don't want to leave the band, but I don't want to be disobedient to my calling,' and everyone being like, 'We completely understand. We hate to see you go, but you gotta do what God wants you to do.' And then we've had things where guys would just be like, 'I just don't like this anymore. I don't want to do it.' And everyone within the leftover people, saying, 'I understand that it was this guy's time to go, because I don't think that his heart was in the same place that ours was, as a ministry-based band,' and stuff like that.

"Ever since the beginning, we've had the same songwriters and we've had the same core members that have been the lead directors in what directions the songs will go. I hope that in the future, God will see fit to bless us with a really solid, permanent lineup and we won't have to worry about it, but I don't know if it'll happen."

Showbread eventually brought in their friend Jordan Johnson of the band Tyler Read to record drums, as well as live member Landon Ginnings to record additional guitars. They've since brought in an 18-year-old drummer named Christian on a trial basis for Cornerstone and filming the video for "Lost Connection with the Head." Once the turmoil of finding personnel to play on the record had settled, the recording process went smoothly, according to Dies. One thing that hasn't changed is Showbread's desire to base each album on a central theme.

"It's important for us to kind of have a specific theme throughout the record," he continues, "even if it's not a concept record or even if it's not as thematic as *Age of Reptiles* is, which wasn't a concept record either, but had a really heavy theme – to be like, 'Well here's the basic idea of what this record is saying and here's where it comes out.' And with *The Fear of God*, I think it's the idea of letting go of everything – about losing everything and embracing that in a way that the world would view that as insanity yet being happy with that – and how that fits into our faith in Jesus."

The record also continues a theme of combining various musical influences. Dies explains that the band took punk energy from influences like *The Shape of Punk to Come* by Refused (the main influence on *No Sir, Nihilism is Not Practical*), Nirvana, Misfits and Squad Five-O, and balanced it with the "garage-y type of pop rock" of Weezer and The Flaming Lips.

"I would like to say that any originality that Showbread has is completely our doing, but if there's any kind of unique element to it that people notice it's probably just because we mash up a lot of really weird influences, but the influences are really strong," Dies says. "The biggest reference we had was the Weezer album, *Pinkerton*. Anytime we were writing and recording we kept going back to *Pinkerton* and, especially sonically as the studio approach – we kept making our engineer listen to *Pinkerton* and he hates it – (we said) 'This is how we need this to sound' and stuff like that, and Nirvana's *In Utero*, like that really jaggedy, abrasive production with really edgy punk songs and then going back to Weezer to make things have melody and make things have structure."

"Ever since the beginning, we've had the same songwriters... I hope that in the future, God will see fit to bless us with a really solid, permanent lineup and we won't have to worry about it, but I don't know if it'll happen."

Photo: Bob Butler

In the past, Showbread has taken some heat for their secular musical influences from parents and fans, but Dies backs up his listening choices as edifying to him as an artist.

"It comes to a point where if you've got something that people have an issue with, and it's beneficial to you in some way … being like, 'Well I can't just change it, because you say so and because you think it's right. If I felt like God was telling me to, then I would,'" he says.

In the end, Dies hopes the band and the record will inspire listeners to think for themselves.

"One of the things that Showbread advocates is, when we talk to kids and when we talk on the stage about what we believe, is not just believing something because a band told you that it's a good thing or a pastor told you it's a good thing," he explains. "If you want to have belief, whether it's belief in something or belief in nothing at all, you have to find out for yourself. I encourage people to find out, because I think it's worth finding out. I mean, you're here and alive, and (if you) really think that there is no God at all, then just affirm that for yourself. Search it out and make sure you have every reason to believe that.

"I think that's where the truth comes from, and when people dig that deep and they look for the truth, they will find the truth. I personally believe that the truth always is Jesus Christ and that that search will yield to that absolute truth. That's why I encourage people (to do) that. So I wanted to somehow summarize that kind of philosophy, starting the title track by being like, 'Okay, well, where is God because the world sucks. It is a terrible place. People are unhappy. All this bad stuff happens every day,' because I think that's one of the largest arguments the world has against Christianity: 1) that Christians are fake, and 2) that the world sucks, so where is God? And me as a Christian being like, 'Yes, this stuff does suck, so where is God?' And then the turning point of (the final track, 'The Fear of God'), is being like 'Here He is, and here's why.'"

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Paramore
HONESTLY BRAND NEW

BY MATT CONNER

THEIR LAST ALBUM, *RIOT!*, WENT PLATINUM HERE IN THE STATES AND GOLD IN THREE OTHER COUNTRIES. THEY SCORED A GRAMMY NOM FOR BEST NEW ARTIST. THEY'VE TOURED WITH NO DOUBT, NEW FOUND GLORY AND JIMMY EAT WORLD AS WELL AS HEADLINING THEIR OWN THEATRE CIRCUIT. OH, AND IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT ALL FIVE MEMBERS OF PARAMORE ORBIT THE AGE OF 20.

With so many accomplishments in a short career span, it's no wonder the pressure is mounting for the Tennessee band's third album. Yet vocalist Hayley Williams, guitarist Josh Farro, bassist Jeremy Davis, guitarist Taylor York and drummer Zac Farro all seem prepared for the release. Most likely, it's a combination of the band's faith in God, the organic approach to the new recording and the confidence of a young band finding their niche.

For *Brand New Eyes*, slated for release September 29, it was the band's live show that served as the biggest inspiration for the new album, with a longing to match that level of energy and raw emotion. Not only is that where the band feels most excited about their sound, but it's also a way to combat the current obsession with overproduction in the genre.

"We're really big on our live show and we feel that it's really powerful, so we want to catch the raw feeling on the album," says Josh Farro. "It's not about messing up on the album, but at the same time, sometimes some things might be a bit out of tune, but it still sounds cool so we kept a lot of that. Everyone now wants to make things perfect. They drench the vocals in Auto-Tune and all that stuff. It's all so cookie-cutter, but I think people want something real. I think someone that's not very musically inclined can tell if a record is real, even if they can't pinpoint the difference between an organic album versus a Disney band or something where it's perfect."

That longing to create an organic album affects everything – from the production to the songwriting. For Paramore, it's about allowing the songs to say what they need to say and sound how they need to sound, regardless of the pressures to continue the sales from before.

"It's definitely hard to keep things organic," says Farro. "You have a label that's basically breathing down your neck saying that they need songs that are going to sell. We can't just sit back and say we want to write songs on this record without caring if they're hits or not. We never approach writing with the mindset of making sure a song is a hit. We honestly write what we love. Of course, it's always in the back of our head that we need to make it sound good, but we don't want to fit some formula.

"We never approach a song saying that it needs to be a hit. We just write what we love and if it becomes a hit somehow, that's great. If not, that's fine, too. I think on *Riot!*, we were definitely trying to make the songs a little more commercial, because we knew that was a big record for us and it ended up gaining a lot of success. But for this record, we had kind of established ourselves and obviously a third record is very important, so we didn't want to do the same thing twice. We're very proud of it, so if it doesn't do well, then that's just what happens. It's just God's will either way, so I just hope the fans like it."

When it comes to their faith, Paramore has been upfront from the beginning about their Christian beliefs and roots. And that only continues as the band becomes more popular, even as it becomes increasingly difficult.

"It's inevitable for our faith to show through our lyrics and music just because that's what we believe with our lives," explains Farro. "It's bound to come out that way. It's not an easy thing to balance your faith in music. That's about as vulnerable as it gets, because it's a very personal thing and so many people hate the thought of a Christian. We deal with that all the time, so it's not easy to admit that we are. There's persecution at times, so it makes it hard."

Farro says the song "Let The Flames Begin" has opened the doors to spiritual moments at their live shows. "It has an intro to it and then Hayley starts singing, 'Father, Father, I'm ready.' It gets really heavy. I remember this drunk girl came up to me and she was backstage somehow and she just said, 'Oh, you guys are so goooooood.' I was like, 'Um, thanks.' Then she said she got chills on that song and I was like, 'That's cool. I mean, you're drunk, but there's something still at work during that song.' I know what she felt was from that point and that song.

"Most of our songs are just happy and fun and have-a-good-time," he continues, "which no doubt fans like, but once we hit ['Let The Flames Begin'], it's heavy and spiritual. You can just see it on their faces. Sometimes I'll look out and see a couple fans with their arms raised and eyes closed, so that's really cool to see. It gives them a chance to worship and that's beautiful."

Farro believes Hayley's lyrics allow the band's fans to resonate with the subjects she's singing about – whether the subject is a broken relationship or a spiritual longing. And for the rest of the band, the music itself provides a way to spiritually connect with their audience.

"It seems that Hayley is allowing herself to become more and more vulnerable with each record," says Farro. "She's very honest and forthright about her life and some of the songs are really bold for her to write, because it's about her personal life. One song is about us arguing within the band and we're having this fight. That's pretty raw. But the thing is that people are going through the same thing we're going through, because we're all the same age, or else they will go through it as they get older. So we want to write about that. Rather than just writing a song that's all fun and happy, which is okay, I think people are searching for something they can relate to. It gives people hope."

On this new collection, Farro notes a new track in particular dealing with a faith crisis and hopes that provides another outlet for a spiritual connection.

"On this record, Hayley sings about her faith on one song and it's about how she struggles with doubt sometimes. I think that's cool that she can expose that, because who doesn't honestly doubt in their life? It gives us a chance to talk to fans or someone interviewing us about the Lord and that's my goal personally. I don't write the lyrics, but hopefully you can hear something through the music.

"The only reason that I came up with the music that I did is because of the Lord," he continues. "Obviously it's the same with every record, but especially on this record, I was just praying for God to provide the music for me, because I didn't have it myself. The Lord was faithful and He gave it to me. It sounds crazy to someone who's not a believer, but hopefully they can understand. We hear it all the time from people who say there's something different about our sound. And that's why we're here."

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Photos: Ryan Russell

WHITE COLLAR

BRING ON THE FREAKS...

SIDESHOW

LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO A BAND I LOVE. THEY'RE CALLED WHITE COLLAR SIDESHOW AND THE TAG "BAND" HARDLY FITS THEM. THIS VAUDEVILLIAN OUTFIT IS CLOSER TO A DYNAMIC ART EXHIBIT IN THE NEW OLD WEST THAN A ROCK BAND. THINK DRUM STREET CORPS ACCOMPANYING ANDY WARHOL ON THE PLAINS OF KANSAS OR OUTSIDE AN OLD WESTERN SALOON CIRCA 1800s. OR IMAGINE THE JIM ROSE CIRCUS AND TRAVELING ODDITY SHOW ROLLING INTO A PIONEER TOWN TO ENTERTAIN AND ENLIGHTEN THE SETTLERS FOR AN EVENING OF INDUSTRIAL NOISE.

OH, THEY HAVE SOME OF THE STANDARD ACCOUTREMENTS OF A TYPICAL ROCK BAND – THERE'S CDs, DVDs AND T-SHIRTS FOR SALE IN THE BACK. THERE'S TWO DRUMSETS, A BASS AMP AND A MICROPHONE AT CENTER STAGE. BUT THERE'S ALSO A 50-GALLON BARREL, BEER KEGS, SAW BLADES, AIRPLANE ENGINE PARTS, A TIRE RIM AND A UNICYCLE ... BUT THAT MICROPHONE NEVER QUITE GETS THE SONG/SINGING OR HARMONY TREATMENT.

BY DOUG VAN PELT

T.D. Benton (affectionately known as "T") will grasp it to introduce a song or two, but its primary use is to deliver an honest, heartfelt confession of the pain and destruction of pornography, self and drug abuse, and like the unveiling of the *Wizard of Oz* at the end of the movie, the audience is given glimpses of real beauty and told flat-out that, "When there's nothing left but God, that's when you realize Christ is all you need."

The White Collar Sideshow is weird. It's bizarre. It's unusual. But get this: after spending a short time with these people you will undoubtedly realize that God is alive in their hearts and they are into this following Jesus stuff ... full tilt.

The first thing anyone will see is the visual. The unusual garb. It's refreshing to not only meet a group of people that quickly learn your first name and treat you with respect and genuine interest, but they're also fairly in-depth artists that are not too aloof to explain the main symbolism behind what they're doing.

"I kind of see the performance as kind of a Blue Man Group meets Rob Zombie thing," spells out T. "Not that I saw Blue Man Group when I was putting the group together, but then I watched it and was like, those cheaters!" he laughs.

"I've always been a horror movie fan," he admits without the apprehension that some curious but doubting church-goers might throw his way. "And I still am, but I've always gotten a different message out of it – like there was a reason somebody was making this and whether it was their hatred, anger, or just trying to prove a point in some strange way."

In other words, he was able to get past the surface level of the art of horror films and see something deeper. This is the same skill he hopes to instruct and empower others in, so that they can see the world around them and creative expression, perhaps, with new eyes. He sometimes makes it a point to bring up that he wishes he didn't have to explain his show. "I shouldn't have to," he'll quip, but he gently does anyway.

"The pig mask is very symbolic with what we are doing in addiction, not (that) men are pigs, but how our heart becomes swine, or dirtiness, like how pigs eat slop. And when we hide those things, that is what we become and even that portrays to the outside. I always tell kids, 'When you know someone in grade school or high school and then you saw them get involved with a girlfriend or boyfriend or even with drugs and how they change and you don't know the same person you used to know,' sometimes that's how our hidden addictions evolve to and we become that creepy figure or that future version of what we used to be and we have to get back to what we were, so that's what the pig mask kind of represents. (His wife) Veronica's character, 'The Faceless Woman,' is really based on my life as a male, looking at women – no face, always at their asset. Or, never looking in their eyes or at their heart, but always (thinking) 'What is in it for me?' Lust, I guess would be a great way to portray that. It's everywhere. Sex sells everything."

He catches his breath and just continues: "And how to re-learn respect – especially with my wife – with other women and having eye contact as opposed to looking everywhere else. The gas mask. Usually my son performs with us."

That's Tristen, T.D.'s 11-year-old son (the guy holding the balloon). "He does local shows and he toured the first three weeks of the summer with us," explains Veronica. "His character is 'The Leech.' He lives with his mom (from a previous marriage) in Russellville, AR." If you YouTube White Collar Sideshow, he's dancing on an orange-ish looking video for "Birdfed Thru IV's."

"The gasmask is a creepy character," continues T.D., "but very symbolic to when you're at home alone. The battle that you have: 'Am I going to click on this? Am I gonna do this? Nobody's looking. Nobody would ever know.' And if that battle that is in your mind or in your heart, versus whatever that is. For me, a lot of that was pornography or myspace advertising or the pictures that you can click on. Very innocent, (but) something that could become very much a part of your life, and how do you get away from that? And it's a battle – the warfare that you have within your own mind and heart about the things that you're dealing with."

VERONICA, THE FACELESS WOMAN – LEFT BEHIND CUSHY JOB FOR BASS GUITAR, TRAVELLING IN BAND RV WITH TERRORIZING DOGS.

PHILIP – RANDOMLY PICKS PEOPLE OUT OF AUDIENCE TO PLAY 50-GAL. BARREL, WHO USUALLY RECEIVE MINISTRY AFTER THE SHOW. "HOW DID YOU KNOW?" (A GOD-THING)

T.D. BENTON – PERCUSSIONIST. CREATING HORROR FILM, CALLED "WITCHUNT."

THE LEECH - "HE'S A CREEPY KID," BEAMS HIS PROUD DAD (T) IN AN ADDAMS FAMILY SORTA WAY.

He finally reaches the end of the characters, describing his own ring-leader role: "My character is kind of the … I would say, just myself – the insanity that you go through just being a real human being and trying to stay focused on things – learning from your mistakes and teaching others through your mistakes and trying to inspire and be passionate about that message and showing other people that, no matter what you're going through, you yourself can take whatever actions that you're having from your hidden addiction and flip it around and use it for someone else to realize they're not alone. I think that's what the insanity is. The videos explain exactly what's going on in the songs – exactly what was going on in my mind in the moment and some real-life situations from part of my life.

"I love taking the old horror movies, the *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, who we are in public and who we become when nobody's looking. And *Frankenstein* – man, what a great movie! Don't treat somebody the way you don't want to be treated. Or they will become a monster. Love people. Encourage people. Challenge people. Done in a horror movie way. Strange, but that's how God works, I think. Out of the box.

"Look at Jesus. Died on the cross, rose from the dead. How much out of the box can it get? Yeah, we can't put that in a little bitty church and expect people to shape us as Christians. We've got to let God shape us for who we are and how He can use us for who we are and not for what other people want us to be. I think that's what our whole performance – hopefully, people go home with and see a new life in their life. Even though it's a creepy way, I hope that we are able to shed light at the end. 'Hey, you know what? This isn't how it has to be! It can be like this.'

"The drums and all the junk – the flea market stuff – are basically just stuff that we found laying around and thought it'd be cool to use and didn't realize how the whole image came together that way. That was a total God thing, as far as a circus-y sideshow and the top hat and the creepy mustache was just part of a 150% effort of, 'If I'm going to do a sideshow, I've gotta be the same person all the time. I can't be two different people in order to get the message across.' I think it adds to the spectacle of what the performance is. And unusual. I think and hope a lot of people walk away going, 'I've never seen anything like that, and I'd love to see it again and maybe get something else out of it – either through the videos or the message or even just the music. Maybe just to inspire somebody to do something different musically. Also, I didn't just want to use a bunch of keyboard effects on a computer. I wanted people to see what we really used on our CD," he laughs.

Right there you have it. A grocery list of oddball things that are held up in a simple, what-you-see-is-what-you-get type of honesty, in order to reinforce the idea that we're all valuable and we all have faults, and so it's just a foolish and futile effort to hide behind our masks when healing can begin with confession.

The guys are working on a horror movie, which they hope to be a teaser for their shows in 2011 or 2012. "Hopefully we'll get to tour with this performance for another year and a half or so and then the next time we'll come out after that will be a whole different show." Take our word for it, find out if you're anywhere near a White Collar Sideshow and go see it … they won't be bringing this thing out forever. Plus, like a disturbing or mysterious movie, you'll want to see this spectacle again and again to figure out more of the plot.

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THE TRAILER THAT GETS YOUTH PASTORS SCRATCHING THEIR HEADS. "WHAT'VE I GOTTEN MYSELF INTO?" | HM'S EDITOR DONS THE PIG MASK. | THE UNRULY HANDLEBAR MUSTACHE THAT'LL SOON AIR ON THE TV SHOW, *THE DOG WHISPERER*

THOUSAND FOOT KRUTCH

Photo: David Molnar

NO LONGER *COMATOSE*, BUT *ALIVE* AND WELL

Skillet

BY KELLY KETTERING

NOW IN THEIR 13TH YEAR, THE HARD ROCK BAND SKILLET IS GOING THROUGH SOME CHANGES. LIKE ANY OTHER 13-YEAR-OLD, THEY HAVE EXPERIENCED SOME GROWING PAINS. SINCE THEIR INCEPTION IN 1996, MANY MEMBERS HAVE COME AND GONE. AND WITH GETTING A LITTLE OLDER, THEY HAVE LEFT BEHIND THE NAIVETE OF THEIR EARLY DAYS AND HAVE BEGUN TO EXPLORE A DARKER ROCK SOUND WITH HEAVIER THEMES.

Since Skillet was last on HM's cover in 2006, their drummer Lori Peters amicably left the group. The remaining members of the band, lead vocalist and bassist John Cooper, his wife and guitarist/keyboardist Korey Cooper and guitarist Ben Kasica, found this particularly unfortunate because one of the band's stand-out elements – possessing a female drummer – was gone.

"I thought, there's no way we're going to find another girl and I wasn't even looking for one to tell you the truth, because I just thought that just wasn't going to happen," says John. "We tried a bunch of drummers, and Jen (Ledger) was going to our church … I had never heard her play drums and I just thought that she's really young and she's a young kind of cute, sweet girl … and I'm sure she's not a great drummer."

But knowing Jen through church, the band was certainly willing to at least give her an audition, and when they did they were pleasantly surprised to find that she was an excellent percussionist.

"So we went for her and I thought there was going to be a lot she has to learn – she's never done anything professionally, but she's really got it," John says. "That's the thing, you can teach people how to be on the road, and how to do their job, but you can't give somebody talent if they don't have natural talent, and she really has that. And then after she joined the band I found out that she could sing. I had no idea she could sing … so we started incorporating that into our music and our fans immediately fell in love with her. So she starts singing on the new record."

With Jen's singing abilities now brought to the table, the band searched for other ways to expand their sound and their fan base. After the sudden surge in the group's popularity that comes with two Grammy-nominated albums, 2003's *Collide* and 2006's *Comatose*, respectively, they made sure to step things up as they worked with different producers on the latest record, *Awake*, which releases August 25th.

"It's cool getting to work with some of my favorite people," John gushes. "For instance, Chris Lord-Alge is my absolute favorite and we were lucky enough for him to mix this record. And my favorite rock producer, the producer I really wanted to work with, we were able to work with on this record and his name is Howard Vincent. Howard Vincent did P.O.D.'s *Satellite* and albums with Papa Roach, My Chemical Romance, Three Days Grace, Daughtry and Seether, a lot of really big rock albums. I think that was the reason that this record is a little more aggressive than the last album. It is a little heavier, because working with a producer like Howard, he is a real rock guy, and he is into capturing that raw rock sound."

While Lord-Alge and Howard brought some bite to the record, it still remained the band's creation, as they spent many hours and days molding it to fit their standards, as well as the standards of their growing fan base.

"I've been writing for this record for almost two years now, just working trying to get the right songs and all that. We tried different producers for the record and there has just been a lot of work put into this album, probably more than we ever have had to do in the past because we are now dealing in two different worlds. We have the Christian world, which we have been doing for a long time and then on the other side we have Atlantic records which is really trying to break us into the mainstream rock world. That has been increasingly difficult because we are such a known name in the Christian world. Everybody in the mainstream world knows who we are, they just don't really know if they want to support a band that has had the level of success we have had in the Christian market."

This new record shakes that perception as two of the albums biggest tracks, "Hero" and "Monster" both discuss issues that Christians and non-Christians can relate to. "Hero", for instance, is about our ever-changing world and the ways we can healthily deal with the bad things and bad influences that are occurring around us.

"We are living in a scary world and it is getting darker, and in the past three years, a lot has changed," John explains. "The war is seeming to be going on forever, the economic crisis … I mean sure, things seemed to be going bad three years ago, but that has gotten much worse. And if you look at youth culture, the loneliness that people are feeling is drastically different from three or four years ago. So that is what the song "Hero" is about. It's the fact that, whether you are looking at politically in this economic crisis, or looking at our role models in Hollywood or even the church, with all the sexual immorality and all these things with the Catholic priests… all of our heroes are falling and they are almost not worthy of being called a hero. And the twist on that of course is that you can become a hero. If you are waiting for someone else to do it, maybe you should step up to the plate and do it yourself. And that's what the switch is, like maybe you can do it yourself and be a hero to someone else."

Other songs on the album also tie into this theme, such as "Awake and Alive" and "Never Surrender," which speak of standing up for what you believe in and never giving up on what you want to accomplish in life, regardless of the negative influences on your life and the battles you must face.

"What I do not want to do is stop doing the Christian events and Christian tours that we have done in the past, because I like doing that and I love being in the Christian market and I've been a Christian music fan ever since I was a kid," John said.

"Monster," however, takes a nearly opposite approach in that we all must be aware of our less-than-holy side, so that we can improve upon it.

"Everyone has this darker side to themselves that you don't want people to see, even the people you love the most," John says. "You try to keep it hidden underneath. I also think that the more you go in your Christian life you want to keep that old self, if you will, at bay. You don't want anybody to see him because you know that guy is wrong, and that is when you get really bad. A lot of times as Christians we don't like to admit that at times we are feeling like crap, sometimes we are going through these things and it is in no way justifying that you have a right to be a crappy person, or a monster, if you will. But it helps me realize I do want to be saved, and I do want to change."

One way the band does not want to change, however, is they do not want to abandon their Christian audience for a secular one, regardless of their popularity or urgings from their secular record label.

"What I do not want to do is stop doing the Christian events and Christian tours that we have done in the past because I like doing that and I love being in the Christian market and I've been a Christian music fan ever since I was a kid," John says. "So, there is a little bit of a temptation when you begin to have a little bit of mainstream success, which we did with *Comatose* a little bit when we were out on the Three Days Grace tour, and there is a temptation where people want you to stop doing Christian events and stop doing Christian publicity because they want you to just be known as a viable rock act. So I think we are going to keep doing the same things, play our own tour at House of Blues and stuff like that. I mean it's not churches, where it's so Christian-y that people don't come, and then hopefully be able to join those two worlds together, but I have always been very clear about my mission and what I feel called to be. I love singing about my faith and talking about my faith and there won't be a time for Skillet that we stop doing that. Those are maybe some mistakes made by some of our other band friends that have maybe crossed over that kind of wanted to just act like they were not involved in Christian music and we are not going to do that, I think that is probably a big mistake for other people as well but I know it would be a mistake for me. So, we are doing our own tour with Hawk Nelson. I think the label would rather see us go open up for Buckcherry or Shinedown or something like that, and I am open to doing that at some point but not if it means we need to stop doing what we've been doing for 12 years."

And while Skillet is not prepared to back down from doing the kind of tour they want to do musically, they will be sacrificing their usual flashy, pyrotechnic-filled stage show to play some smaller venues and interact in more intimate settings with fans.

"Once you do a show with pyrotechnics you never want to do it without it," John explains. "It's like playing a show with a really great lighting rig and then having to play the next day without any lights at all. Its just a big bummer."

But what they will not be missing are The Who-like technical difficulties these setups have sometimes caused.

"On our first tour we caught one of our amps on fire – the same amp – on two different occasions," John says. "The second time we just burned that thing down, we were like, this thing has had it man."

But from every inflamed amp to every Grammy-nominated album, Skillet has taken something away from the experience and has learned, though not without the help of their faith. Now with the release of *Alive*, the band is truly just that. The time has come for them to pop their pimples, grow some chest hair, and move on to an even bigger and better stage in the band's existence.

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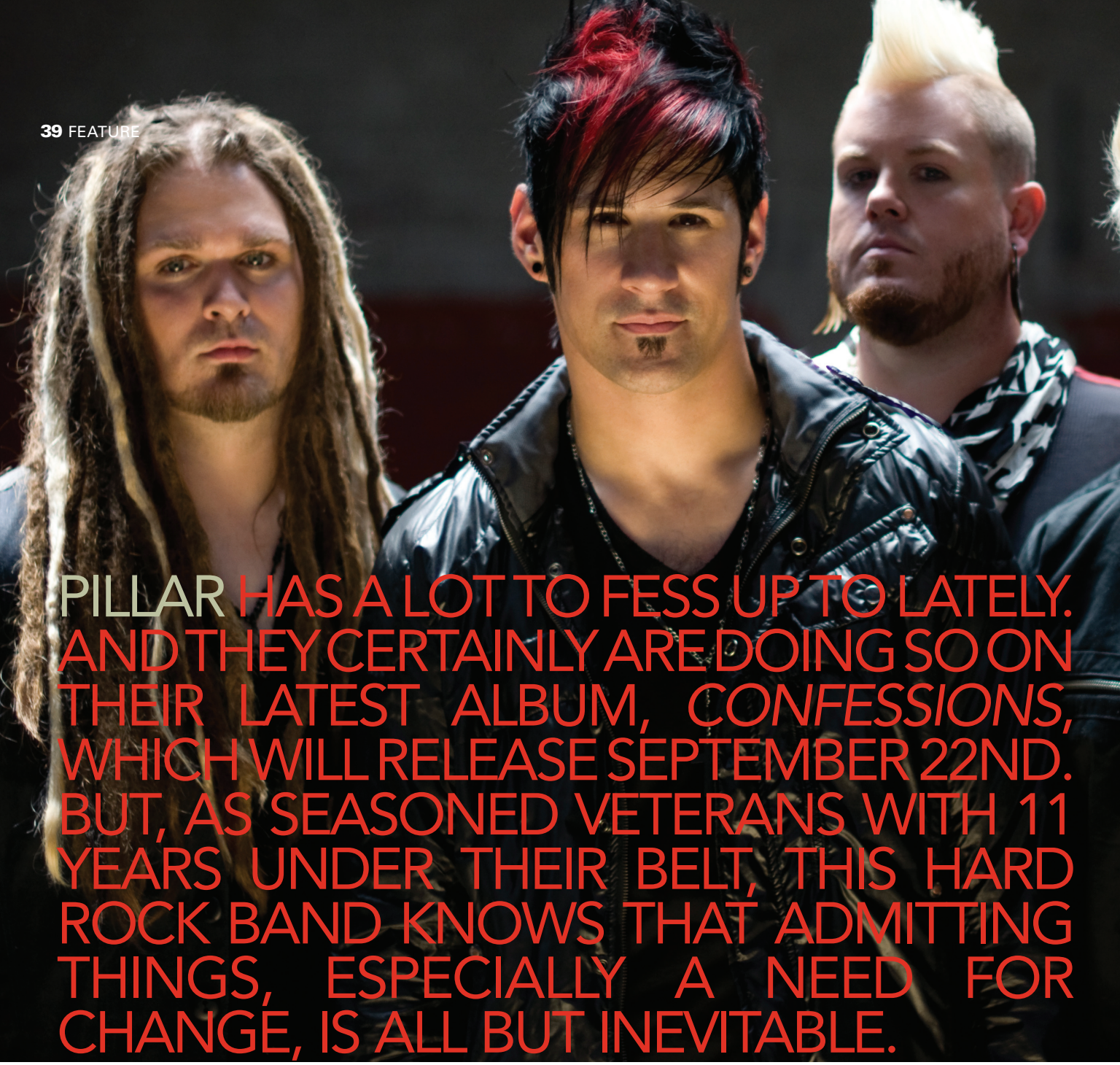

PILLAR HAS A LOT TO FESS UP TO LATELY. AND THEY CERTAINLY ARE DOING SO ON THEIR LATEST ALBUM, *CONFESSIONS*, WHICH WILL RELEASE SEPTEMBER 22ND. BUT, AS SEASONED VETERANS WITH 11 YEARS UNDER THEIR BELT, THIS HARD ROCK BAND KNOWS THAT ADMITTING THINGS, ESPECIALLY A NEED FOR CHANGE, IS ALL BUT INEVITABLE.

This past year the band faced such an issue when both drummer Lester Estelle and bassist Michael Wittig left the band to pursue other interests, and Pillar had to decide if they would go on, and if so, who these members could be replaced with.

"Change is a good thing, " explains founding member and lead singer, Rob Beckley. "We've had a lot of members in Pillar. We had a different guitar player and different drummer back in the day, and I was actually the original bass player. But Lester came to me and said, 'I just really feel that God is calling me to be done with my time in Pillar.' We had kind of reached a stagnant point creatively, also, so nothing against either of the guys. And Lester, his heart was really in the studio. He loves it and it's always where he wanted to be, and he wanted to move to Nashville and get involved with being a studio drummer. He had had a lot of relationships that really couldn't grow because he wasn't in Nashville. And he has already played on Neil McCoy's new record, done a lot of fun country stuff, he's gotten into a lot of things already. He's a phenomenal guy, he'll do great wherever he goes. And so it was the time, there were some things going on and we knew it was just time to make the move. And then we made the decision to keep going and we got a new bass player as well, and the guys that we have right now have huge hearts and as far as musicianship, we are just at a level that collectively, we have never been at before."

And that new level has only been able to be achieved with the addition of the band's new members. With bassist Richard Gilliland, Rob speaks of how grateful he feels to have God call Richard to be a part of the band and bless the new album with his talent.

"Rich has been going to church with me for five years and he has been playing with the industry since he was 17," Beckley says. "He's just one of those guys that he started playing upright bass and he loves to play fretless. He is an incredible musician – one of the best bass players I have ever met, let alone get to play with. And he loves the fans, he loves being there, meeting with them, talking with them, and just being there for them. I love seeing him just be a servant. It is refreshing."

Taylor Carroll has now also entered the group as the new drummer, bringing his flair and musical lineage to the table, as his father is a Grammy Award-winning singer and songwriter.

"Everyone was worried about Taylor filling Lester's shoes, but this is what we said: 'We don't want another Lester, because Lester was one of a kind,'" Beckley clarifies. "We aren't trying to replace Lester. We are just trying to find someone for the new era. And Taylor came in, and he is a young guy that is just naïve enough to not realize how big the shoes are that he's trying to fill. But he's an unbelievable artist. His Dad was Bruce Carroll, so Taylor's been playing music since he was a kid and his talent level is ridiculous. He brings so much to the table on the musicianship side of things. And he is winning the hearts of a lot of our fans. We were very sympathetic to the fact that some of our fans would be mad that Lester wasn't there; but they have to understand, for us, Lester wasn't even the original drummer. We started this band and even got us signed and our original drummer played on the *Fireproof* record, too. Like, people don't know... A lot of people would be like, 'Whatever, it's not Pillar without Lester.' But I'll tell you what, Taylor will win people over, because he puts on a fun show. He's one of those guys that you will watch him play drums and you can't stop watching him because he is so fun to watch. He's a great performer, but more importantly he has just got a huge heart. He loves people, he's fun to be around, there's an energy going on in Pillar that I don't think people are ready for. I don't think they see it coming."

People may not see the new Pillar coming just yet, but they will as soon as *Confessions* hits their ears. New band members are not the only changes Pillar has made to their sound. They also decided to work with producer Rob Graves (Red, Wavorly) over their long-time producer Travis Wyrick.

"Wyrick is a dear, dear friend and on this record, he was a cheerleader," Beckley says. "He is still one of our great friends and we absolutely love him to death. We didn't use Rob because we didn't like Wyrick, it was more that the label wanted a new direction.

"We did five records with Travis, and at this point in our career they wanted to see what else they could pull out of us. But when it came to choosing a producer we had about four or five guys in the hat of names, but Rob wasn't even one of them. I got together with Rob back in December to do a writing session and he was like, 'Hey, I'm available, if you guys are still looking for producers.' And I started talking to the label about what they thought about us working with Rob, and they loved that. And the end product is sonically the best-sounding record Pillar has ever put out by far. It sounds huge. Even the CHR-type tracks that are little more up-tempo than we have usually had, even those songs, just sonically they just sound so rich and pure and big and melodic. It's the first record that I put in and I'm like, 'Oh my gosh, is this us?' It just blows my mind. And Rob had a lot to do with that. He's just a prodigy; I don't think he's even reached his full potential yet. He's so gifted. And we are very thankful to work with him and a new friendship has started."

With a new sonic progression underfoot, the band looked to their music's content. After doing a program with their Kansas church called "My Secret," in which the band encouraged people to write down the secrets that hold them back from leading a full life, put them in a container the band provided, pray about them and then release them from their minds so they would no longer be held prisoner by them.

"Some of them were silly, one said, 'I farted in the front row of the concert tonight,'" Beckley said. "But there were some unbelievably intense ones. 'I'm 12 years old, and I'm addicted to pornography' or "'I was raped and the pain has caused me to think that the only way to love boys is to have sex with them.' And that girl was, like, 16. Just a lot of hurt and a lot of burden and a lot of sin and they were coming in and confessing it. It just put such a burden on my heart that I wanted to do a whole era, I wanted a whole season in our Pillar career to be about starting that healing process in people's lives. I want people to listen to this record and be inspired to make a physical confession. Now, there is no song on the record called 'Confession,' there was a song that inspired the topic. I just felt so excited to call this record *Confessions* and to be able to do things like that. To get kids to start that healing process."

Simultaneously working as a healing process for the kids and for a band that has ripped apart and re-sewn together its core team, *Confessions* has proven cathartic for all involved.

"Without sounding like an arrogant jerk, I'm so excited about this record," Beckley exclaims. "I can't wait for this record to get out because I want people to say things like, 'Really?!' Pillar is not done. This is the beginning of a new era and I can't wait for it to come out and just for people to see that."

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"I wanted a whole season in our Pillar career to be about starting that healing process in people's lives."

BY KELLY KETTERING

Thousand Foot Krutch

Kindly Remove Your Mask

By Corey Erb

It used to be that a marquee in lights was the sign that you had arrived as a band. Now, Thousand Foot Krutch may have found a more generation-appropriate indicator: burrito wrappers.

"It's every kid's dream – burrito wrappers!" frontman Trevor McNevan jokes. "We've made it!"

The band was selected alongside Fireflight and Hit the Lights as part of Taco Bell's *Feed the Beat* promotion, which allowed fans to vote for the "Best of the Beat" bands to be featured on the contest's music festival-themed website. But they weren't even aware it existed until their management had entered them among hundreds of bands. As the story so often goes, they ended up winning. Taco Bell put money toward the recording of "Bring Me to Life," which fans can download for free off FeedtheBeat.com.

"It's funny, they took us to the Winter X Games to play there to represent Taco Bell and that was amazing," McNevan explains. "I think for six months or the rest of the year on every burrito and taco wrapper and hot sauce and stuff it'll say 'Thousand Foot Krutch' and have the logo and website and that kind of stuff, so pretty amazing."

Now that they've accomplished every child's dream, McNevan and bandmates Steve Augustine and Joel Bruyere found it time to turn that single into a follow-up to 2007's *The Flame in All of Us* with the new record, *Welcome to the Masquerade*.

"The masquerade thing is really just talking about the different masks that we all wear at certain times or places in our lives," McNevan says. "There's always things you don't want people to know you think or say. It just felt really appropriate in writing this record to kind of capture that and each of these songs (is) representing something that we hide behind our masks. I really feel these are songs for the broken and the brokenhearted, but they're songs of hope and there's definitely a purity and a hope involved and intertwined in there, as far as taking off the mask as well. But it's very real when it comes to that stuff. The whole record, topic-wise, in some cases deals with some pretty heavy stuff and in other cases not so much."

Some of the record's lighter moments include the first Christian radio single, "Forward Motion." McNevan expressed some hesitation about its selection because of its softer, poppier sound. Fans can rest assured, though, because this album features an arena rocker in the vein of "Rawkfist" and "Move." The song highlights one of the band's many continued uses of innovative marketing strategies in addition to the aforementioned burritos and hot sauce.

"We have a song called 'Smack Down' that was intentionally written to be the theme song for *WWE SmackDown*," McNevan says. "We're kind of working out the logistics of it right now, so we'll see what happens with that. Something we were kind of stoked about, and I think being Canadians as well with hockey being so big and kind of what we grew up with, there's a song off the new record called 'Fire it Up' and EA Sports is using it in the *NHL 2010* video game for Xbox and PlayStation and all that.

"There's been a lot of film focus on this record, too. I'm a big fan of film and I kind of made a list as part of our marketing plan of the top 10 films to target coming out later on that these songs would kind of lyrically and just mood-wise really fit. As a writer, I'm really into the kind of theatric side of music as well anyway, especially with TFK, 'cause it's what we've been doing even on stage, and stuff has been really theatric with the last couple of records and it just adds a little more color to the music. Through that, I think visually while writing. I'm always making a film and stuff as well, so this time (we) kind of pinpointed, after writing, certain songs that would really work for certain films and so we've been really going after that with our theme and we'll see what happens."

Thousand Foot Krutch's big-screen debut almost happened unintentionally last winter when Tooth & Nail asked them to record a Christmas song for *X Christmas*.

"We weren't going to do it as TFK just 'cause to me at first the thought of kind of a heavier Christmas take on a Christmas classic just sounded kind of cheesy," McNevan says. "But they really wanted one and I was just kind of messing around and we ended up doing 'Jingle Bell Rock' just for fun and put it on the compilation and the cast over at EMI and Capitol and everybody – they were really stoked about it and pushing it to all the horror movies coming out in the past Christmas season. We didn't end up actually landing one – I think they're gonna try again for the next season. We almost got *Friday the 13th,* which would have been cool."

This heavie[r] was in

Despite the band's many commercial forays, *Welcome to the Masquerade* still features a few curveballs – including "The Part That Hurts the Most," a synthesizer-driven tip of the cap to the "industrial retro vibe." The album features lyrical depth as well – feedback from the fans even inspired some of the songs.

"There's a song called 'Look Away' that I think is probably one of my favorite songs on the record," McNevan says. "It's very much talking about that person going through those emotions and those feelings of suicide or that kind of hopeless feeling where you don't feel like you have someone you can really even talk to about it and when you try they kind of give you that pat on the back, like, 'Ah, it'll be fine, walk it off,' and if they look away it'll go away. I think on a spiritual level, too, as a church and as people and as Christians, even in our faith and our daily lives and stuff, I think we do that a lot as well. We're as guilty or more guilty in some cases of just kind of giving that pat on the back or the patch-up instead of taking the time out of everyone's busy schedules to just listen and to be there and to love people how God intended it to be."

Overall, the album is decidedly heavy, partially a product of working with acclaimed producer Aaron Sprinkle, who produced TFK's 2003 breakout *Phenomenon*, and engineer Randy Staub, who mixed Metallica's self-titled "Black Album."

"This record's definitely our heaviest record yet and that was intentional," McNevan explains. "We've always been a rock band and kind of fused other things in there from day one and there's always been a heavier element to the band for sure, but there's an aggression to this record that just kind of came out in the writing and everything else just kind of really suits the band. I think the concept and everything that just kind of came out is very inspired. The best way I can describe the new record is just big, crunchy, adrenaline rock. In saying that, there's actually more ballads as well. I hate to use the term 'ballad,' but there's more kind of quieter moments, I guess I should say, on the record than before. It felt like a real natural progression for us. A lot of great bands out there in this genre (are) using a lot of strings right now, and also maybe kind of getting a little lighter, a little poppier in music, and so it just kind of felt like the right time for this record to actually be a little heavier."

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Photo: David Molnar

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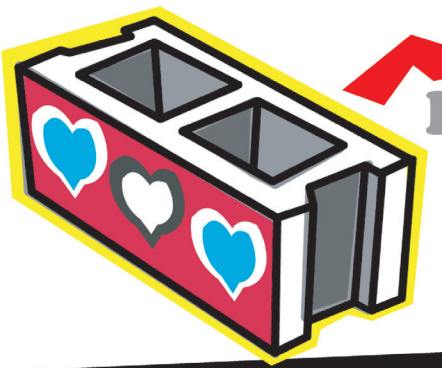

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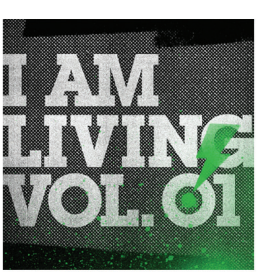

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PICK OF THE LITTER

Quiet Company

"Come on, come on. The sun is up now," swoons Quiet Company lead singer and founding member, Taylor Muse. Formerly of Eisley, Muse branched out on his own to form Quiet Company, but the influences of Eisley as well as bands such as The Polyphonic Spree and Belle and Sebastian are certainly detectable. Well-arranged and upbeat, these songs are cuter than a puppy but still hold their bite. (Kelly Kettering)

myspace.com/quietcompany

☆ **Imaginary Airship**
Imaginary Airship isn't just the band's name, it's a perfect way to describe the listening experience. Floating, atmospheric, trippy music presents deep lyrics fittingly. (Corey Erb)
myspace.com/imaginaryairship

Burning Yesterday
When told to think of "classic rock," most people think of older bands such as The Rolling Stones or Journey. But for this generation's classic rock sound, we turn to bands with heavy rock riffs and vocals such as Skillet and Queens of the Stone Age. With the producing expertise of Travis Wyrick on board, Burning Yesterday has achieved that sound as well. (KK)
myspace.com/burningyesterdayrocks

Stonehigh
Aggressive, angry hard rock with uplifting lyrics. They'll endear themselves quickly to fans of Decyfer Down's *End of Grey* or Kutless at their heaviest. (CE)
myspace.com/stonehigh

Blood And Water
Wielding a fusion of punk, rock, pop and a few funk backbeats, Blood And Water will fit in among the likes of New Found Glory and Slick Shoes. (CE)
myspace.com/bw

Your Best Friend
Your Best Friend pens driving indie rock songs with honest lyrics. Call-and-response vocals recall early Taking Back Sunday, with breakout potential in the Emanuel ballpark. (CE)
myspace.com/yourbestfriend

The Machine
Exploding like a pipe bomb, The Machine flings shrapnel in every direction with scream-driven industrial metal, only intensifying the blast when the forceful instrumentals are allowed to drive. (CE)
myspace.com/themachinemusic

The Eternal Affect
A big sound, with some post-hardcore and lots of layers that work really well together. (CE)
myspace.com/theeternalaffect

☆ **Chase and the Reach**
Perky and melodic with a syrupy sweet vocal accompanied by the occasional downbeat, Chase and the Reach has that pop sound down. If you added some dope beats by Timbaland to the mix, they could have a Justin Timberlake album. (KK)
myspace.com/chaseandthereach

Calcaska
Michiganders who embrace pop and emo influences and add a touch of soul to the mix to create a sound that will endear itself to young and old ears alike. (CE)
myspace.com/calcaska

Stükenberg
Featuring apt use of non-traditional instruments like the trumpet and mandolin to create a smart pop-rock aesthetic, Stükenberg pens folk lyrics that rival Mêlée's for catchiness. (CE)
myspace.com/stukenberg

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What **Chiodos** Says

CHIODOS IS ONE OF THOSE BANDS THAT CAUGHT MY EYE BY THEIR UNUSUAL NAME. THE BAND HAS ALSO COME UP A FEW TIMES IN MUSIC CONVERSATIONS I'VE HAD WITH LOCALS AROUND HERE. THEN, WHEN I WAS TALKING TO MXPX DRUMMER, YURI RULEY, ABOUT THEIR *COVERS II* ALBUM, I HEARD THAT CHIODOS WAS HIGHLY INFLUENCED BY THE POKINATCHA PUNKS. I FIGURED IT WAS TIME TO GET ON THE PHONE. I HAD THE FOLLOWING CONVERSATION WITH KEYBOARDIST/VOCALIST BRADLEY BELL. I HAVE TO ADMIT, I FELT LIKE A DISAPPOINTED ATTORNEY, WHOSE WITNESS "TOOK THE FIFTH" ON A COUPLE QUESTIONS, BUT IT WAS GREAT, NEVERTHELESS, TO TOUCH BASE WITH THIS TALENTED BAND THAT IS EXPERIENCING THE GROWTH OF THEIR FANBASE AFTER EACH SHOW.

Photo: Adam Alekis

What effect, if any, has the band MxPx had on you and/or Chiodos?
They've had a huge effect on us. I mean, they're the ones that was the first punk rock I started listening to when I was 14 or 15, I guess. I remember when *Life In General* came out and I really started to get into them. It was amazing to get to be able to bring them out on tour with us last spring and get to know them and everything. They're really cool dudes.

Cool. I started getting into them with that album, too. I saw that tour about 7 or 8 times and it finally clicked on what made me love that band. Good musicians. When comparing Bone Palace Ballet with All's Well That Ends Well … What was different about the process of writing and recording as well as the results in the final product?
I guess with *All's Well That Ends Well*, we had a lot more time with it to work on that, since it was our actual first LP release and also our first release on Equal Vision Records. … We went through a couple different member changes during that process, too. You could really tell the difference on most of the songs with that one. Then we got to tour off of it for a couple years once it was released on Equal Vision. Once we started to gain a lot more recognition the touring cycle started to end and it was time to go in and write and record *Bone Palace Ballet*, which we didn't have a huge, huge … like we did with *All's Well That Ends Well*. We spent six months with it and got it all recorded in that time, too. So, it was a different process for us. We knew what we wanted when we were going into it. I think you can definitely tell the maturity level between the two albums.

If you had to sacrifice aggression or pure melody from an entire Chiodos performance, which would you choose? Why?
Personally, I guess aggression, because I've always been more into melody, but they both definitely affect our music. We take pride in both of those aspects and it's really hard to choose between both of 'em, because I think that what kind of makes us – the combination of that sound.

What is important about aggression in music? What about melody?
I think with aggression is pretty much considered. People that are listening really cling on to and relate to (it). Usually it's the melody, so, I think they go hand in hand. When we're playing live, it's a lot easier to portray to a large group of people something (aggressive) than something that is more melodic.

What do you think of Jesus Christ?
I don't know. I'm not going to represent the band with a statement on that.

Okay. I'll risk asking another question that's pretty similar to it: What do you think about His claims to be "the Way, the Truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father but by Me?"
Like I said before, everyone has their own opinions on religion in the band and that's not what we're here for. We're not here to make any claims or force any beliefs on anybody else, so I'll leave it at that.

I can understand that. I do know that when I pick up a copy of Rolling Stone and Bono is talking about God, I am very interested in what he has to say. It makes for good reading.
(pauses, waiting for next question)

How important is the visual and artwork to what you're doing with Chiodos?
I think it's definitely important, especially with the lack of CD sales these days. I think that if people want to go out to buy an album, the artwork portrayed and the imagery should be amazing. It's definitely important to have the right artist bring what you want to say.

How do you judge when a new piece of artwork is good or what you want to use?
We usually work with one artist in particular and so far everything he's given us has blown us away. If it doesn't, we provide him with our criticisms and he comes back with what we want to see.

How do you evaluate a song when you're creating new Chiodos material?
We sit in a room together and try to agree as much as possible and allow each other as much of that creative freedom. I guess we play it over and over again and the whole demoing process really helps us with that until we get what the song becomes.

What are some of the most exciting things you've heard in the last year or so?
Music-wise, I'm really digging the new Manchester Orchestra CD. There's a band called Fun that I'm really stoked on and they're coming out with a new album. They're former members of The Format and Anathallo.

If someone was going to develop some sort of video game for Warped Tour, with multiple challenges, sets, and characters, what would the Chiodos portion of the game entail?
(pauses a long time) I don't know. I don't think there's a video game like you're talking about here.

I don't know. It's kind of an open-ended question. I'm thinking of like a SimCity-type situation… In SimCity you're creating things and you get to watch it grow, but other video games somebody creates the universe and you've got to go through whatever the creator of the universe decided were the challenges, so either direction you want to go in, what would the Chiodos part of the game look or feel like?
I mean, most of us have a good time or stuff, but nothing's crazy. It's like the same thing over and over again every day – we're sitting on our bus, hanging out, drinking a couple of beers or playing video games. I don't know.

Maybe the Chiodos portion can be you're playing a video game and you get to go into the Chiodos bus and play video games in a video game.
There's definitely a lot of Halo fans around here, so probably something along those lines.

When you think about the activism of today and the apparent failed activism of the 60's, which turned into the "me decade" of the 70s, how do you think the young people of today will succeed where their hippie predecessors failed? Why or why not?
I think the coming of the internet definitely helped a lot. For networking, I think it's produced (a lot) of good. And back then I think that was the downfall of a lot of it. You had the radio station and now we have the most mass communication ever created.

Would you rather see a magazine article that evaluated and praised your band's music, with great visuals? Or an online site that is easily spread around and becomes "viral?" Why?
I would rather see a magazine article, because it's hands-on. It's always a lot more appealing. It's like going to a store and buying a CD. I still look for it and getting information from newspapers and magazines.

Anything else you'd like to add?
Nope.

What is an interview question you've always wanted a journalist to ask you?
I don't really have any. I think I've heard about 'em all. Is this for *HM Magazine*?

If you could go back in time and keep any one song from ever being written, which song would you erase from musical history and why?
From ours?

No. Any song in the entire world…
I'd pick a Jordan Sparks song. I don't know. It's annoying to hear. Do you know the song I'm talking about?

No. I've got a couple of daughters that are like 11 and 13, so I probably should know it, but I don't. So, let's say, in the next couple of years, some really bright TV network people come up with American Idol for punk rock or alternative rock. What is your opinion of the very existence of a show like that? Why do you think it would work out?
If there's an audience for it, it would work out. It would become saturated with punk. There's definitely an audience for something like that on TV.

What is one of the last things you do almost every night before you go on stage?
Stretch.

What's the worst injury you've ever received from a live performance or a musical situation?
Tore a meniscus last year. I think that was from being on stage, but I don't really remember exactly how it happened. Our guitar player played a show last Sunday and busted his tooth and had to go get it fixed.

If you were an A&R executive and you wanted to create a band or sign a band… If you were going to create a band from scratch, what would they sound like; or if you were going to sign a band that nobody's heard of, who is that band?
I don't know. I really like a lot of different aspects of music. It'd be really hard to choose. I've thought about that, as far as the bands that I've met that are always asking for it. That Fun band is really good. I have thought of things in that vein.

So, they don't sound anything like Anathallo?
No, not really.

I'll have to check 'em out. Well, on a typical night when you're on the tour bus and you're just chilling out, what are you going to want to watch on satellite TV, if you have that available?
I'd go with a basketball game. I'd watch that.

Did you play sports growing up?
Yeah.

Right on.
I'm racking it all the time, because I'm an old man now.

Do you ever yell at the screen like an old man or a fanatic?
Oh yeah! I love it.

So, what's your prediction on the NBA Finals this year?
I'm going to go with Obama and say Lakers in six.

Well, I appreciate your time. I've kind of run through my list of questions, unless there's something else you wanna talk about, I'm game. But otherwise, I can't think of anything else.
I can't think of anything off the top of my head.

Alright. Have a safe trip today. I hope your gig goes well.
Alright, thank you, man.

One more thing: do I pronounce your name Chiodos with like a hard "ch," or is it more like a "ch-ch?"
It's more like a soft ch, like chimichanga. (laughs)

✖

"I don't know. I'm not going to represent the band with a statement on that."

Hey
Kentucky
HM Readers

ANVIL FEST
5

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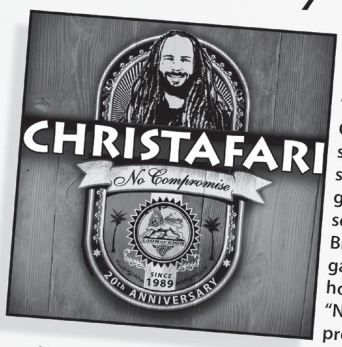

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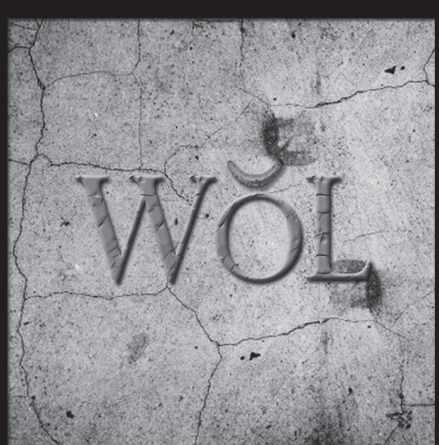

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LEELAND

Album: *Love Is On The Move*
Label: Essential
Release Date: August 25, 2009
Members: Leeland Mooring, vocals/guitar; Jack Mooring, keys/BGVs; Mike Smith, drums; Jake Holtz, bass

myspace.com/leelandmusic

"Going back to the basics" holds a different tone coming from a band with a 21-year-old vocalist and only two albums under their belt. So Leeland Mooring, the namesake and frontman of Leeland, isn't referring to the roots of their sound. Instead, he's referring to something much bigger when discussing the worship rock band's upcoming release, *Love Is On The Move*.

"I think on this record, we just wanted to get back to the basics of what we do," says Mooring. "We weren't going in to make it for a certain crowd or a certain people group or whatever. We just wanted to make whatever music God wanted us to make. We prayed, 'God we just want to make a record for You. We wanted it to be a ton of love songs for You.'"

That need to return to the basics of their own faith and spiritual fervor came from the learning experience of being on the road. According to Mooring, the experience proved exciting and encouraging, yet it also sapped the energy of constantly giving themselves away to the listening audience each night and those fans who stuck around to chat.

"Coming off the road from the *Opposite Way* tour was amazing and we experienced a lot of great stuff. But we also came in with a deeper understanding of the presence of God and how important that is. You realize how much you really have to lean on the presence of God, especially while you're out on the road touring and playing a lot. You're constantly around people and you're constantly giving out. I think we came into the studio with a real experience of understanding how much we depend on the presence and love of God and that relationship with Him. When that is broken or disconnected, that's just the worst thing ever."

Working with new and old friends helped the Texas quintet develop the right mood in the studio. Famed producer Ed Cash (Chris Tomlin) and *Sound of Melodies* co-writer Steve Wilson both helmed the production for the band's third release and, as Mooring explains, the presence of God took over their sessions together.

"It seemed that every day we were in the studio, we just turned it into a big prayer time and worship time," says Mooring. "Every morning we went into Ed's place and it was just natural. We just wanted to pray in the morning, but then it would just turn into this worship time where I would have a guitar in my hand and would just start playing. We were so focused on worshiping God – sometimes for 45 minutes, other times it would only be a quick prayer and into the studio. But there were so many amazing moments of feeling the presence of God in the studio so we would just wait on God's presence and until it was the right time to go play."

Lyrically, Mooring describes the latest album as a bridge between *Sound of Melodies* and *Opposite Way*, merging the vertical lyrics of the debut with the love/action theme of the second.

"We didn't have a certain theme going into the record, but as soon as all these songs came together, we saw a certain theme come out. One thing we've seen these last few years is that love and action and justice are not separate issues. They're all the same thing. They're supposed to be united. So, when we sing a song of loving our neighbor, that song should be followed with action to our family and friends or strangers on the road or the homeless.

INTERVIEW: MATT CONNER

Album reviews

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SHOWBREAD

THE FEAR OF GOD

"This is a record we've wanted to make for a long time, but in the past we've had so many opinions in the band that made it difficult," explains songwriter and vocalist Josh Dies about Showbread's brand new release, The Fear of God. Dies' allusion to the band's former make-up is true, as the last couple years are marked by a revolving cast of characters crafting the band's signature "raw rock." But you wouldn't know it, since multiple listens to Fear reveal a cohesive, expansive rock record.

Perhaps that's because Dies still retains as much control as ever. The rawk energy of earlier discs is still present on tracks like "The Great Emasculation" and "Nothing Matters Anymore." The dynamic energy on "Lost Connection With The Head" beckons slight Marilyn Manson comparisons, while other songs come out much more straightforward and melodic ("Shepherd, No Sheep," "I Think I'm Going To See You"). The fact that Showbread pull off the varied styles equally well is testament to the core talent that never changes with Dies and bassist Patrick Porter.

The title track, "The Fear of God," closes the album (well, it's the last full track) with Dies' beautiful declarations of God's love and provision. "You place your hands around my heart / You quiet the emptiness in me / A king that heals / A God made a servant / You set the captives free." It's a powerful moment on an album ripe with them and provides a spiritual center of gravity the rest of the music revolves around.

By album's end, it's clear that Showbread continues the trend of mesmerizing a growing audience by impressively utilizing the entire sonic palette available to them. [TOOTH & NAIL] MATT CONNER

Rating system

05 *CLASSIC*
04 *FABULOUS*
03 *SOLID*
02 *SUSPECT*
01 *AMISS*
***** *1/2*

SKILLET
AWAKE

Three years after their mainstream success of *Comatose*, Skillet returns with a familiar mix of hard-driving songs and slower ballads. John Cooper's voice has become noticeably more gravelly over the years, but that makes new drummer Jen Ledger's angelic vocal contributions even more welcomed on "Hero" and "Awake and Alive." With that said, the female vocals are underutilized, particularly since Cooper's voice sounds strained on slower songs like "One Day Too Late." The orchestral elements from *Comatose* are largely absent here, save for "Awake and Alive" and "Believe," which use them effectively, and "Forgiven," which doesn't. The crew does find the right interplay of heavy guitars, a memorable lead guitar line and Cooper's vocals on "Sometimes." They went a little more obvious with the lyrics this outing, making it clear whether they're singing about God or something else. Is *Awake* the epic follow-up to *Comatose* it's purported to be? Not necessarily. Will it cement Skillet's popularity? We'll see. ~~[INO] COREY ERB~~

PARAMORE
BRAND NEW EYES

If the precocious Hayley Williams spends a lot of *Brand New Eyes* correcting bad behavior in others ("You treat me just like another stranger"), she enlightens with "Ignorance," and then points out, "Next time you point a finger / I'll point you to a mirror" on "Playing God." All of this anger seems to be directed at some immature boy in Williams' life; at least until we get to "Looking Up," the eighth track. This pivotal song describes the near break-up of Paramore, an event that obviously still troubles Williams. "I can't believe we almost hung it up," she confesses. "Confessional," however, is not a word that describes Williams much of the time. Yet confessional is the only word that fits "The Only Exception," with its lyrical ode to rare love in a mostly loveless world. Exceptional love, the kind she never saw her parents share with each other, has suddenly and surprisingly found its way into Williams' world. "Spiritual" is another word that rarely applies to songs on *Brand New Eyes*. In fact, "Careful," oddly paraphrases Jesus with these words: "The truth never set me free/ So I'll do it myself." The one clear place where the Christian life is alluded to is "Turn It Off." The lyric, "I'm better off when I hit the bottom," relays one of those end-of-her-rope moments, where only God can ease the pain. Musically, producer Rob Cavallo (who's worked with Green Day, among others) gives *Brand New Eyes* a crisp, clear sound. For some reason, tracks like "Ignorance" bring to mind '80s era Billy Idol. But the more I think about it, the more that analogy makes sense, because Idol made a similar transition from angry punker to angry mainstream rocker during that timeframe. And as good as *Brand New Eyes* can be, just wait until Hayley Williams begins to venture beyond her insular personal realm, and starts to see the wider world around her. That'll be the true eye-opener. ~~[FUELED BY RAMEN] DAN MACINTOSH~~

BETWEEN THE TREES
SPAIN

Spain is an album of love songs that will immediately get stuck in your head, but won't wear out quickly. Catchy, but never trite. "One Last Time (Darlin' II)" combines just the right amount of strings with piano-driven melodies that allow Ryan Kirkland's soaring vocals to be the focus, as elsewhere on the record. "Move" is another standout track. Between the Trees set a high standard for originality with *The Story And The Song*, and while *Spain* doesn't surpass its predecessor, it's a fitting continuation. This album feels right for the waning moments of summer. ~~[BONDED] COREY ERB~~

BURNING TREE PROJECT
TIME AND COLOR

Some background – I came across the Burning Tree Project very early in their career at a show in NYC. Their performance was typical for a brand new band (i.e., a little sloppy, but with a lot of heart), but it was interesting and showed a lot of promise. Fast forward several years, add in some pretty extensive lineup changes, and we now have a band with a new record and a sound that is nothing like where they started. Change is not a bad thing. It would be concerning if there hadn't been any artistic growth in five or so years. But in this case they have evolved into something that is, to sum it up, completely average. Listening to this record (side note – when did six songs start to constitute a record?) left me with no opinion whatsoever. It is absolutely in the middle of the road. That's not to say that it's bad. The melodies are pretty good, the music is okay, and the lyrics are decent. But they aren't great. It's not awful, either. It's just … there. Which leaves you with the question: is it better to have a completely average (and ultimately, forgettable) album, or is it better to have a more polarizing album, good or bad, that people will remember you for? Me? I'd go with option number 2. ~~[TRAGIC HERO] MIKE HOGAN~~

PILLAR
CONFESSIONS

It took a few listens before I realized Pillar doesn't include many (if any) "God" or "Jesus" references in their new release. Even so, songs like "Fire on the Inside," about the infilling/empowering of the Holy Spirit, and "Secrets and Regrets," which concerns spiritual redemption, speak volumes about God's intervention in the lives of humankind. Yet even this disc's one cover song, "Shine," is by Collective Soul and likely better known as a secular hit. From start to finish, however, *Confessions* is a tight, powerful rock and roll recording, as its songs successfully walk that fine line between being oblique and coming off overly preachy. Even newcomers to Pillar music will quickly realize these are men of faith – without getting overwhelmed by Christian-ese. Sonically, Pillar never rock so hard that they overwhelm or abandon melodies. "Whatever It Takes," for instance, includes some great guttural vocals, yet there is never any harshness simply for the sake of harshness. A title like *Confessions* might lead you to believe Pillar spills its guts with these songs. However, they come off more like an understanding priest, helping out an absent parishioner that hasn't been inside confessional in years. ~~[FLICKER/ESSENTIAL] DAN MACINTOSH~~

CHEVELLE
SCI-FI CRIMES

Sci-Fi Crimes drops heavy on "Roswell," unplugs on "Highlands Apparition" and aims for modern rock radio's turf on "Letter to a Thief" and "Jars." But no matter the direction taken, there's no denying the space-themed project remains an obvious Chevelle project from origin to conclusion. Tapping a new producer on the shoulder in Brian Virtue (30 Seconds to Mars, Jane's Addiction) does nothing to dissuade the instantly recognizable elements ever-present in every Chevelle hit: Pete Loeffler's emotional tenor vocal, searing, imaginative guitar work and some of modern rock's greatest hooks. There's no "Vitamin R" or "Send the Pain Below" present here, but *Crimes* is the most complete release in Chevelle's discography. From the strong one-two of "Sleep Apnea" and "Mexican Sun" to the acoustic turn on "Highlands Apparition," the full expanse of Chevelle's talent takes flight here. "Letters," in particular, is bound to become one of the band's better-known tracks. *Sci-Fi Crimes* ends up doing exactly what a fifth album should – cementing a band's industry position, beginning to define a legacy and delivering what fans expect. ~~[EPIC] MATT CONNER~~

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Showbread *Fear Of God*	04	04
Skillet *Awake*	04	03
Paramore *Brand New Eyes*		03
Between The Trees *Spain*	03	04
Burning Tree Project *Time and Color*	03*	02*
Pillar *Confessions*	03	03*
Chevelle *Sci-Fi Crimes*	04	04
Owl City *Ocean Eyes*	04	04
Grammatrain *Kneeling Before Shields*	04	04
All Star United *The Good Album*	03*	04
Hawk Nelson *Live Life Loud*	03	02*
Darkness Before Dawn *Kings To You*	03*	04
Thrice *Beggars*	04	04*
A Hill To Die Upon *Infinite Titanic Immortal*	04	04
Dignan *Cheaters and Thieves*	04*	04
Dalit *S/T*	04	03

OWL CITY
OCEAN EYES

There's good reason for why everyone from *Spin* and iTunes to Yahoo! and AOL sing the praises of Minnesota's Owl City. Their electropop gems shine as bright as a summer day, feature pop sensibilities like Death Cab's Ben Gibbard and completely arrest your attention with carefully placed blips, beeps and layers. In short, it's impossible to not pay attention to Owl City. *Ocean Eyes* finds one-man act Adam Young maturing a bit more, yet completely retaining his youthful zeal and appeal. His resonant tenor still moves effortlessly through the laptop-driven material and songs like "Fireflies" and "Vanilla Twilight" instantly become some of OC's best songs. The former is an instant classic with what could be this year's catchiest tune. Even with everyone beginning to notice, this is obviously only the beginning for Owl City. ~~[UNIVERSAL] MATT CONNER~~

GRAMMATRAIN
KNEELING BETWEEN SHIELDS

Although it's been about a decade since we last heard from Grammatrain, this trio sounds about the same as the last time we left it. And that's a great thing, because this five-song EP is filled with powerfully melodic hard rock that's oh so easy to love. Pete Stewart's borderline screamo vocal during "Forever" is about the only clue that this is a new-millennium recording. "Damaged" comes in two versions: rock and acoustic. When Stewart rocks it, it's as though he's going through primal scream therapy, whereas the acoustic take leans more toward regret. It's hard to know what Stewart means by the line, "I'm finally free of the sickness in me." This could be a spiritual thought, but then again, it might address healing after a broken relationship. But inspiration matters less than the fact that Grammatrain is back on the tracks once again, and bound for musical glory. All aboard! ~~[GRAMMA] DAN MACINTOSH~~

ALL STAR UNITED
THE GOOD ALBUM

With the title *The Good Album* it is hard to determine whether or not ASU are putting down their previous releases or building up this new one. Maybe a little of both. Whichever the case, they could not have picked a better title. It is easily their best in almost every category, from songwriting, production and lyrics to pure entertainment value. Ian Eskelin and crew have always had a good time with their music, but with *The Good Album* the party is addictive with highly hummable melodies and hard-hitting hooks over lyrics that seamlessly flow from the silly ("Dude...That's Freaking Awesome") to the sublime ("The Blame"). Musically ASU will win you over with the art and production prowess of the fantastic opener "Surface of the Sun," which will appeal to fans of Oasis, Kula Shaker and U2. They manage to close the record with a quirky power pop gem called, appropriately, "Good Times." The album as a whole is consistent and strong… it's all good for All Star United. ~~[DOUBLE HAPPINESS] DR. TONY SHORE~~

HAWK NELSON
LIVE LIFE LOUD

From the pep squad cheering "Someone throw your hands up…" on the opening track to the "Na, na na naaaah" refrain on "Meaning of Life," *Live Life Loud*'s first four songs establish that this is a Hawk Nelson album. Before you can get too comfortable, however, the first distorted, tension-building guitar riff on track 5, "Alive," begins a two-song transition into new sounds for the Canadian four-piece. After "Ode to Lord Stanley," a brief, transitional nod to their native land's cherished sport, it's back to the youthful pop punk. Tender harmonies drive "Shaken" and "Tis So Sweet," the latter featuring an organ and bagpipe to complement hymnal lyrics. Outside of a few moments of experimentation, the best by far being "Alive," which would sound like a completely different band if not for Jason Dunn's unmistakable voice, *Live Life Loud* indicates a band that's comfortable appealing primarily to a younger audience. ~~[BEC] COREY ERB~~

DARKNESS BEFORE DAWN
KINGS TO YOU

Arizona sextet Darkness Before Dawn strike the curious balance between Cookie Monster vocal brutality, a technically inclined metalcore soundscape embellished with gothy keyboard accents and lyrics deep in apologetic, poetic and theological intent. And most of the songs on their first full album are paced through many melodic tempo changes as to produce heavy hooks that suspend time insofar as seeming both epically long and radio-single compact. Fans of certain current and classic Scandinavian bands should find plenty to like about DBD for their similarities, but that's not to say they're not pursuing a fairly original muse themselves. Artful aggression to rip your head off righteously, but am sure they're gentlemanly enough to stitch it back onto your neck. ~~[BOMBWORKS] JAMIE LEE RAKE~~

THRICE
BEGGARS

Oh, internet. Turning Metallica into Gen Y whipping bags and forcing Thrice to release albums two months before they wanted to. It's a good thing Thrice had finished intricately crafting this album with its message of our inability to control life's circumstances. Sonically, *Beggars* falls somewhere between *Vheissu* and *The Alchemy Index*'s *Earth*, though it features several songs that sound different from anything Thrice has put out. Atmospheric guitars and a keyboard make perfect accompaniments to one of the weightiest messages on the disc ("Circles"): "True progress means matching the world to the vision in our heads / We always change the vision instead." It's fairly easy to decipher the influence Dustin Kensrue's faith has on his writing, though it's never overt enough to quell the usual debate. It's difficult to pick out a radio song from this album, save perhaps the hard-charging "Talking Through Glass," but that hardly sinks this unashamed project. ~~[VAGRANT] COREY ERB~~

A HILL TO DIE UPON
INFINITE TITANIC IMMORTAL

Expectations are funny things. Bombworks marketed A Hill to Die Upon's debut album as melodic black metal, but what we have is old school death metal, played fast and furious with Lamb of God style vocals. The approach is very similar to Becoming the Archetype, but without the technical bent and penchant for classical interludes. The CD has a very classy-looking battleground-type painting for the cover and the band appears to be young and wear *Braveheart* face paint, as the album is rife with mythological themes. Apparently AHTDU started out as a hardcore outfit, and underwent several style changes prior to this point. Hopefully they're done changing styles, because now they've got my attention and soon they'll have yours. ~~[BOMBWORKS] CHRIS CATTO~~

DIGNAN
CHEATERS AND THIEVES

Meet the next DIY band bound to make good on their promise. This quintet has slowly built a strong buzz and following on the back of beautiful indie rock sounds and relentless touring. Stage appearances with Ra Ra Riot and Colour Revolt lend Dignan some credibility but, in the end, it will be a release like *Cheaters & Thieves* that wins over the masses. Each song finds its sonic roots in indie rock's current vast, open landscape, while branching out toward spiritual powers and ideas floating above. At times, Anathallo comes to mind and at others it's Arcade Fire with inventive arrangements revealing layers with each listen and thoughtful instrumentation around every turn (see "Two Steps" and "You're My Witness"). ~~[RVLT MGMT] MATT CONNER~~

DALIT
S/T

Dalit is a term referring to approximately 25% of the population of India who, according to the country's caste system, is not considered part of human society, but is actually something less than human. Hailing from Norway, the band Dalit has not only taken on this name for their band, but in songs such as "Nomad" and "The Upper Hand," their lyrics address the abuse, deprivation and utter hopelessness the Dalit endure. It's not your usual song topics, but the lyrics fit well with the band's mix of doom and death metal. Dalit's sound is rather unique, with some similarities to Paramaecium, though not as plodding, as well as Virgin Black, though not as eclectic. Sampling is occasionally used, while the singing is a slow but understandable growl. The album's production is somewhat raw, as is the songwriting. Dalit scores very high for originality, but otherwise has released an album that doesn't completely measure up to other bands in this genre. ~~[ENDTIME] CHRIS BECK~~

KILLSWITCH ENGAGE

S/T

Killswitch Engage brings it hard to the table again on their self-titled, fifth overall release (not to be confused with their 2000 release of the same name). I've always admired Killswitch for their capacity to infuse melody with their powerful, unforgiveable metal. Their ability to find a melody over some of the insane guitar from Joel Stroetzel and Adam Dutkiewicz (listen to "Reckoning") has always been one of the best reasons to listen to Killswitch. On *Killswitch Engage*, they continue this trend, pushing their envelope, keeping the listener guessing – and listening for more. "The Forgotten" does an incredible job of it. It's a Southern rock track that hits you in the gut in the middle with a metal kick. Immediately after, you grab a breakdown heading into some incredibly beautiful harmonies to take the song home. Songs like "Take Me Away" kick off like a machine gun before moving back into the quieter verses. The production itself, it should be noted, was not done by Dutkiewicz – for the first time in the band's career. Dutkiewicz's extreme crispness left a very distinct tone throughout their records, and in turn, their career as recording artists. This time around they turned to Brendan O'Brien (famous for working with AC/DC, Pearl Jam, Incubus) who put his polishing touches on the tracks. If you're worried about too much of a departure from their sound as a result of a new producer, you don't have to worry about much. Although there may be some subtleties to the sound, by and large the record retains the same feel Dutkiewicz has left fans with in the past. Definitely a record worth listening to, but is does it live up to being called one of the most anticipated albums of 2009? Most likely not. ~~[ROADRUNNER] DAVID STAGG~~

MUTEMATH

ARMISTICE

With their second full-length at-bat, *Armistice*, MUTEMATH demonstrates a firm commitment to their unique sound and vision. Dynamic and at times just plain tricky drum parts, analog and digital synthesizers that jump from lethargic and tense to languid and graceful all while maintaining a slightly elevated heart rate, and guitars that stretch the technical limitations of their design are just a few of the ingredients that mesh to form the rich textures vocalist Paul Meany's atmospheric tenor glides across. Noise, tension, beauty, release; it's becoming the MUTEMATH formula and the faithful will love them for it. If they have a weakness it may be a lack of true breakthrough songs with the kind of hooks that take them to the next level of commercial success. "Spotlight," released as a 12" vinyl single earlier this year, and as yet another "how in the world did they do that" music video, might have the best chance at breakthrough status. But overall the band seems more than happy to create depth over flash; to push way into the mystery with no attempt to offer simple ideas or tunes. Who wants tidy, commercial songs about the chaos and dysfunction of the world anyway? The tracks on *Armistice* are just as manic, pulsing and ultimately satisfying as any soundtrack to the collapse of "normal" should be. ~~[TELEPROMPT/WARNER BROS] JOHN J. THOMPSON~~

KISSING COUSINS

PILLAR OF SALT

The namesake Kissing Cousins lend some idea of expectations here – a familial yet disturbing indie rock sound. Yet the lo-fi production from the fantastic Richard Swift and brooding L.A. hooks are dead-on and will draw you back again and again. Thus, *Pillar of Salt* rubs the listener equally wrong and right and gives the band a memorable effort. The dark, snake-like maneuvers of "Over Now" descend minor chord progressions into a haunting, even dirty indie rock lullaby. The apparitions continue to hover on "Don't Look Back," with its softer, slightly bothersome melody, and "In Too Deep," whose percussion shifts front and center while Heywood's vocal creeps under the skin. All together, the work is a slithering spiritual specter that pulls most of the right strings. ~~[CANOPY GLOW] MATT CONNER~~

LEELAND

LOVE IS ON THE MOVE

Leeland Mooring's sincerity is disarming, and his music with the band Leeland comes off like prayer journal entries set (seemingly) immediately to guitar chords. *Love Is On The Move*, the group's third release, is once again filled with excellent songs. Leeland looks inward with "Holy Spirit Have Your Way," and outward to a suffering world during the Brandon Heath-assisted "Follow You." Best of all, however, is "New Creation," which frames Leeland's meditative thoughts in a Beatles-inspired, semi-psychedelic rave-up. This track's more aggressive guitar work is a welcome new tone in Leeland's sonic landscape. It's the sort of highlight that makes you wonder what Leeland would sound like if they only experimented a little bit more. Who knows, they could become a more mainstream The Violet Burning or, perhaps, a more worship-centered The Choir. But all wishing aside, *Love Is On The Move* finds Leeland doing fine, just the way they are. ~~[ESSENTIAL] DAN MACINTOSH~~

LEPER

AND EVERYBODY DIED

AED is a work in paradox – a comic tragedy if you will. The somber title points to the liner notes, which address the subject of death: "let us not fear the things we cannot control; for in the end everybody lived as they chose to live … and everybody died." The sting at the end is not lost on this writer. We are to live as children, not fearing death, and yet simultaneously warned that death is coming. The silent implication is obvious. And this is the ironic genius of Leper – death rock that speaks of hope in Christ? Slow, prodding tunes with painful vocals occasionally give way to more rhythmic tracks. In fact, not until track four, "Lyken," is a moveable beat established. The band really shines when they combine dark-ambient tones with danceable beats and textures, such as my favorite "Voal Negru de Dantela." Although Leper's contribution to the goth scene is unique, points of reference would be Eva O's solo work, Sisters of Mercy and perhaps Nosferatu. ~~[GRRR] LOYD HARP~~

MEMPHIS MAY FIRE

SLEEPWALKING

Dallas natives Memphis May Fire deliver their debut album, *Sleepwalking*, chock-full of dirty rock riffs, vivacious vocals and periodic subdued suspense all shredded apart with a Texas chainsaw. More melodic than their earliest material released on their self-titled EP, the songs focus more on snappy licks highlighting aggressive rants courtesy of new vocalist Matt Mullins's temporal style. Carried by perpetual energy, the album is an ardent attempt to avoid hardcore songwriting clichés, while still maintaining intensity. And the Southern swagger followed by pummeling roars on "Ghosts In The Mirror" proves their success. ~~[TRUSTKILL] DAN FRAZIER~~

STAVESACRE

AGAINST THE SILENCE

Jeff Bellew's reunion with the band appears seemless. This 5-song EP has the aggressiveness of *Bull Takes Fighter* and the rawness of *Friction*. Overall sounding like the continued musical evolution of where they last left off. The companion DVD does a nice thorough, albeit homemade job of filling in the historical blanks on the band. ~~[STAVESACRE] DOUG VAN PELT~~

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Killswitch Engage *S/T*	04	03*
MUTEMATH *Armistice*	04	04
Kissing Cousins *Pillar of Salt*	03	04
Leeland *Love is on the Move*	03*	03
Leper *And Everybody Died*	03*	03
Memphis May Fire *Sleepwalking*	03	03*
Stavesacre *Against The Silence*	04	
The Crucified *The Complete Collection*	05	
Mortification *The Evil Addiction Destroying Machine*	04	04
Metavari *Be One Of Us And Hear No Noise*	04	04
Miss May I *Apologies Are For The Weak*	03*	03*
The Color Morale *We All Have Demons*	03*	
Neon Horse *Haunted Horse: Songs of Love, Defiance & Disillusion*	03*	03*
House of Heroes *Meets The Beatles*	03	04
Anchor & Braille *Felt*	03	03
Main Line Riders *WorldShaker*	03	

THE CRUCIFIED
THE COMPLETE COLLECTION

Everyone reading this magazine needs to own this box set, period. It collects two arguably classic albums (their self-titled debut and *Pillars of Humanity*) from a band that ended its recorded output way too early. This box set is aptly titled and a collector's dream in an audio sense. Every song recorded by the band is included here (62 total), including a demo of their first sans-Salomon incarnation, KGB, and the 4-song *Live At The New Order*. There's a DVD that chronicles a ton of songs and behind-the-scenes jokery from the many miles the band logged on the road. Granted, when you're talking straight-up quality, they could have left the demos from disc one and the DVD off and just included the two full-lengths and those two "Ocean Recordings" remixed demos and you'd have the best of the band. But sometimes the "no stone left unturned" approach to collecting songs is the best one. Disc one starts off (KGB) showing a young band that seemingly wants to take over the world for Christ and ends with (2 pre-production demos for Ocean) a seasoned band that actually had the ability to do so. [TOOTH & NAIL] DOUG VAN PELT

MORTIFICATION
THE EVIL ADDICTION DESTROYING MACHINE

It's the album with the kitsch-iest cover in this veteran extreme metal trio's nigh 20-year tenure, but tackles a pretty broad artistic and textual swath. At its heart, the band's original thrash inclinations take precedence, though there's room for touches of doom, death, prog, power and groove variations. And with one of the more comprehensible vocal styles in their milieu (i.e., it's pleasant to hear a band like Mortification that doesn't require keeping one's eyes peeled to a lyric sheet to understand the words), songwriting bassist and Mort' leader Steve Rowe sounds like he's largely solidifying themes he has tackled in the past, but he has it in him to surprise, too. Though he may strain metaphor on "Pilots Hanging From Shoulder Dust" and "Elasticized Outrage," Rowe bears some resemblance to Motorhead's Lemmy Kilmister in the latter. And he comes at least a smidgen closer to his far less guttural speaking voice in his tribute to some of his spiritual and musical mentors on "Resurrection Band (A Tribute To Rez)." Though the more meticulous Bible references in previous albums' notes are missed, and this is more a reassessing of ground covered than breaking new terrain, there's little disputing the sincerity and quality Mort' continue to maintain here. [ROWE PRODUCTIONS] JAMIE LEE RAKE

METAVARI
BE ONE OF US AND HEAR NO NOISE

Looking at this acousti-tronic Indiana three-some, I wonder why beards as thick as SOS pads are so popular nowadays among indie-ish guys, as that's what two-thirds of Metavari sport on their mugs. Upon listening to their full-length debut, however, such thoughts disappear amid the fusion of post-rock, trip-hop, ambient house and the kind of cerebral mellowness that harkens back to Kraftwerk and Brian Eno. Their use of 'puters, synths and more traditional rock band instrumentation results in an original sound that, for all its surging, found vocal snippets and methodical beatmeistering, never loses the serenity that one might imagine originates in their Christianity. Though not what you might want coming from your speakers/earbuds when the mood calls for goregrind brutality, Metavari's music would certainly make for apt accompaniment for certain TV sports, communion services and listening for its own lovely sake. It's tempting to suggest you support them so two of them can afford a razor, but if they continue to proffer musings gorgeous as these, they can keep their faces however hirsute they wish. ~~[CROSSROADS OF AMERICA] JAMIE LEE RAKE~~

MISS MAY I
APOLOGIES ARE FOR THE WEAK

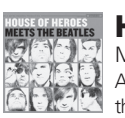
When a band lists graduating from high school in its plans for summer '09, you might tend to assume you'll hear an immature debut effort. But from beat one on *Apologies Are for the Weak*, Miss May I makes perfectly clear that youth is not to be mourned. They alternate between sounding like their Buckeye State brethren The Devil Wears Prada and even touching As I Lay Dying guitar/drum territory at moments. With a total time of just under 35 minutes and only one track breaking the four-minute mark, hard and fast is the common thread throughout *Apologies*. The young band does it well though, sprinkling in a few breakdowns and highlighting melody on tracks like "Tides," while mostly avoiding the tendency to let any new tempo or vocal style outstay its welcome. Now that they've all got diplomas, they're out to show off this impressively mature initial foray into rock star-dom. (As an aside – if you're sensitive to rough language, you might skip track two, "Architect." Otherwise, the rest of the disc's lyrics are benign and even include some veiled spiritual references.) ~~[RISE] COREY ERB~~

THE COLOR MORALE
WE ALL HAVE DEMONS

This group's debut album is a sonic maelstrom of crashing guitars, drums, and top-notch instrumentation as the melodic places the guitars go are well-thought-out and executed perfectly. This is the strongest point from the group in terms of original sound. The vocals are smooth and melodic, knowing when to snarl, bark and scream like a mad dog and when to coo and woo like a serenading scenester. Not a lot of ground is covered we all haven't seen before, but the songs and hooks are so strong that it's hard not to love. If only I could wrap my arms around that "negative confession" of an album title. Ha! ~~[RISE] DOUG VAN PELT~~

NEON HORSE
HAUNTED HORSE: SONGS OF LOVE, DEFIANCE AND DISILLUSION

Neon Horse's mysterious cast of performers (assuming you don't trust Wikipedia or, you know, word of mouth) delivers a second dose of danceable tracks in the shadowy band's *Haunted Horse*. Not a single band has ever sounded more like '80s new wave stalwarts Oingo Boingo, both musically and vocally, than on "Follow the Man" – and Neon Horse pulls it off in thought-provoking style. They seem a little more accessible for the general listening population with this outing than their debut, though they'll undoubtedly remain love 'em or hate 'em. If you have any connection to the 1980s – whether you endured the decade or simply admire its synthesizers from afar – you're apt to find this curious creature known as Neon Horse a refreshing throwback to a more turbulent time in music history. ~~[TOOTH & NAIL] COREY ERB~~

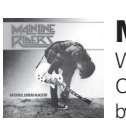


HOUSE OF HEROES
MEETS THE BEATLES

After playing a couple Beatles covers out the last couple of years, the boys in House of Heroes finally decided to properly lay them down for the world to hear. Of course, the masses are already familiar with two-thirds of the tunes present on *Meets the Beatles*, but that in no way takes from the joy of this EP. If anything, the guys from Columbus simply didn't record enough. "Can't Buy Me Love" and "Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da" serve as the EP's bookends and uphold a solid 10-minute summery set that plays it close to the vest creatively. After all, these are great songs, so there's no need to upend the formula. In the middle sits "It Won't Be Long," a straightforward "yeah-yeah" tune that holds its own against the more noted songs. On all three, HoH reminds their fan base of the Beatles' brilliance when it comes to songwriting. And ultimately, they also keep their audience interested with a fun little jaunt. ~~[MONO VS. STEREO] MATT CONNER~~

ANCHOR & BRAILLE
FELT

If there's an imbalance to one side or another, Copeland's Aaron Marsh wins. After all, the sounds on Felt – the first project on WoodWater Records and a collaboration four years in the works between Marsh and Anberlin's Stephen Christian – definitely isn't close to Anberlin's catalog. Instead, Felt explores Euro-pop structures accompanied by horn sections, orchestral moves and soft vocal harmonies. "Like Steps in a Dance" comes off like an Aqualung tune and "Summer Tunes" remains as soft as any other pop/rock ballad released this year. In the end, Felt comes off as entirely pleasant and equally as forgettable. ~~[WOODWATER] MATT CONNER~~



MAIN LINE RIDERS
WORLDSHAKER

Of all the bands that reference Back In Black by AC/DC, this could be the only one that gets close to the Aussie rockers. A few clipping problems weren't fixed in mastering, but the rawk is all raw and spittle-flying fun. ~~[RETROACTIVE] DOUG VAN PELT~~

CASTANETS

TEXAS ROSE, THE THAW & THE BEASTS

Fans of anything from Sufjan Stevens' label, Asthmatic Kitty, will enjoy more of Raymond Raposa's soulful, trippy folk music. Castanets' musical approach is minimalistic at times, thoughtfully layered at others. Each unique sound is carefully considered, whether it's a somber trumpet or an eerie moment of silence. Even though "On Beginning" sounds a bit like one of those nature CDs that's supposed to help you sleep, its layered instruments and sparse vocals combine for a special result. The last track contains some jagged folk storyteller language, so, like the album itself, it may not be for everybody, but from start to finish Texas Rose tells a strong message in trademark literary folk form. [ASTHMATIC KITTY] COREY ERB

SEVENTH ANGEL

THE DUST OF YEARS

After 15 years the band hits hard with hints from their first releases, but with a more relevant sound. A solid base of doom metal with bursts of thrash and death metal, this is a superb comeback. Vocally, Ian has a deeper death growl feel throughout, but combined with the frequent melodic vocal style and occasional narration, they weave a tapestry of dark and powerful storylines. [BOMBWORKS] JEFF MCCORMACK

TO SPEAK OF WOLVES

FOLLOWING VOICES

To Speak Of Wolves is chomping at the bit, ready to make their music heard. You can sense this on their gritty and gruesome Tragic Hero Records debut EP, *Following Voices*. Although this album was released back in January, we at HM felt it deserved its mention, even if it was a bit of a late one. Reminiscent of Every Time I Die and UnderOath, To Speak of Wolves could very well have some good things ahead of it as they grow and develop their screamo sound. [TRAGIC HERO] KELLY KETTERING

NEWSBOYS

IN THE HANDS OF GOD

Newsboys are the reigning champs of Christian pop-rock with longevity, massively successful tours and great album sales. While many bands have shied away from the title of "Christian band" and the role of entertainment aimed at the Church, the Newsboys have not only embraced it, but they are one of the few that do it well. It has been three years since their last studio album and they are back with one of their best, *In The Hands of God*. The opening track is "The Way We Roll," a great Christian youth anthem that sounds a lot like a Steve Taylor track. It probably is a Steve Taylor track. After all, he produces and writes on this and many past Newsboys releases. While that helps make this a great record, that is also one of the main problems that they have had, continually sounding a lot like Steve, from the vocals to the songwriting. Don't let that stop you though, there is still more than one cook in this kitchen and they mix it up enough on this one to keep it interesting. The album is filled to the brim with hooks that will have fans humming and singing long after the end of the record. A highlight is the power-pop "Upside" and the fun and artistic sound of "My Friend Jesus." The lyrics are blatantly Christian and unapologetically uplifting, providing a much needed balance to many an iPod. There is something that overshadows all of this content, though. A month or so before the release, it was announced that dc Talk alumni Tait was joining Newsboys as the new lead vocalist, replacing founding member and long-time leader of the band, Peter Furler. That is huge news and I was excited to see how that would change the sound and direction of the band on this record. That was odd timing, because he is not, in fact, the lead vocalist on this new album. This is Peter's last stand as the main lead vocalist and it's a fitting departure for the founder of this Aussie tribe, as it goes out on a good note. [INPOP] DR. TONY SHORE

I WAS A KING

S/T

Noisy guitar rocking pop from co-ed Norwegians are what this latest band with a sentence for a name make. I Was A King bring together the more serene vocal range of Danielson Familie harmonies, The Jesus and Mary Chain's early penchant for turning the squalls from their axes into chordal sense and various power pop, psychedelic and folk/country rock elements as they deem fit. This they do amid lyrics that yearn, regret and cogitate just enough to give the patina of fervidity to their polite Scandinavian cucumber coolness. So, their Christianity's 'tween the lines, but they're not the hedonistic Odinists or Satanists like so many of the metalurgical stripe on their peninsula. Fine stuff with hooks that grow like larval earworms, but IWAK's best efforts are likely soon coming. [THE CONTROL GROUP] JAMIE LEE RAKE

NEVIAH NEVI

TALES OF TERROR

Brutal metalcore with a juxtaposing female vocal, Neviah Nevi is this generation's Bloodlined Calligraphy and Winds of Plague. Originally starting in 2003, the group first began as a praise band, but over time shifted their sound, for they couldn't resist the draw of the metal claw. They then released their first full length in 2008, *By The Blood of Their Feet*, with Wounded Records. Their 2009 Wounded release, *Tales of Terror*, is a solid effort with some Christian messages well-assimilated into the lyrics, as they speak of defying wrong and finding strength in God in songs such as "Virtue" and "Break These Chains." Neviah's constant breakdowns with strategically placed melodic interludes are almost too generic at times, but overall this album is a concrete effort that any fan of the genre should enjoy. [WOUNDED] KELLY KETTERING

DEREK WEBB

STOCKHOLM SYNDROME

All this fuss over curse words or sensitive subjects on Derek Webb's latest solo sermon, er, disc need not concern anyone. The reason? Derek's creative sensibilities have apparently spent the last year focused on Thom Yorke's The Eraser. Starting with the intro track (obviously titled "Opening Credits") and continuing with "Black Eye," it's Webb's stellar electronica work that actually wins you over regardless of lyrical content. "What Matters More" resides in downtown Laptopville and it's here Webb's pop sensibilities, lengthy rants and new sonic tendencies converge perfectly. It's a nod to '80s pop elements without going overboard and serves as the album's lynchpin. Other highlights include the haunting "The Proverbial Gun," the seductive "I Love/Hate You" and the apocalyptic "Becoming a Slave." While other efforts like The Ringing Bell could grate at times, the music here is so mesmerizing that Webb can say whatever he want and get away with it. [INO] MATT CONNER

RONALD OF ORANGE

BRUSH AWAY THE COBWEBS

Ronnie Martin skews his take on frenetic synthetic pop from his usual Joy Electric purview to this new alias. More twee and reserved both in his emotional/relational geography, here Martin keeps his keyboard sounds familiar within a more limited framework than the concept album scope of recent JE releases. Vocals more prim and tremulous than his norm emphasize the less grand scale of his sentiments, seemingly more about interpersonal relations than much of anything Godward, too. And Innocence Mission fans may want to hear what he does with "Today," too. How ROO will evolve in relation to Martin's fuller-time act should be fun to hear, but these Cobwebs appear a touch tentative. [VELVET BLUE] JAMIE LEE RAKE

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Castanets *Texas Rose, The Thaw & The Beasts*	04	03
Seventh Angel *The Dust Of Years*	04	04
To Speak Of Wolves *Following Voices*	03*	04
Newsboys *In The Hands Of God*	03	03
I Was A King *S/T*	03	03
Neviah Nevi *Tales Of Terror*	02*	03*
Derek Webb *Stockholm Syndrome*	03*	04
Ronald Of Orange *Brush Away The Cobwebs*	03	03

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SCRIPTURE "Jesus replied, 'You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.'" (John 13:7)

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Letters to the Editor

KING OF KINGS

Hey man, thanks for your magazine, I have been following you off and on since '95 when I was first saved! Like a million years ago you guys had a back cover illustration of Jesus with the sword coming from his mouth and all, it was airbrushed. Do you have any idea who did that or what issue, etc.?
–JP, Kansas City, MO

Ed – That was Dennis Preston. He's an artist out of Michigan area. That was in Issue #70, Mar/Apr of 1998.

WHAT DOES THURSDAY SAY?

Which issue has the So & So Says featuring the band Thursday in it? And can that issue be back ordered, 'cause I really like the band and was wondering how they feel about Christianity and are they safe to listen to.
–Jeremy, via internet

Ed – That was issue #104 … Still got it in stock: http://www.hmmagazine..com/store/001103.php

AS CITIES BURN BRIEFLY

This may be late, but I did not notice any mention in the Jul/Aug "Letters to the Editor." Maybe it was just my copy, but where was the rest of the As Cities Burn article in the May/June issue? Only the intro was published and it was published upside down. I was extremely excited when I received my copy – two favorites on the cover and Living Sacrifice was just waiting to be posted on my wall – but the excitement faded just a little when I couldn't read the rest of the article. I still love the magazine, but I would love to read a complete issue!
–Rhe Hill, via internet

Ed – This is kinda funny. The As Cities Burn feature is not incomplete. Those are ALL the answers they gave in an interview. We went big on the photo since we had little text.

EXTREME CHRISTIANS!

I have an idea for HM. What about a two-page story in each issue interviewing a Christian in extreme sports? Surfing, ice hockey, American football, skateboarding, BMX, snowboarding, etc. Just a small expanse on your format. You may attract a whole new group of readers? You could always pose the questions to the sportsman "What music/bands do you like?" and "Do you use your fav music to get motivated before competing?" Just an idea.
–Steve Rowe, via internet

Ed – We used to have a section called "Intermission," where we'd highlight someone not in the music industry. Extreme athletes showed up in that section quite a bit. We just started partnering with Reach Your City, which works with a lot of extreme sports ministries, so you should start seeing more of that in HM. Steve Rowe, huh? That name sure sounds familiar...

NO LOVE FOR DAVID BAZAN?

As I am reading the latest issue of HM, I realized it has been some time since a David Bazan (or any of his artistic monikers) cover-story. He has a new record releasing soon (September 1). This would be a perfect way for you to remedy such an atrocity. Having personally discussed his beliefs with him at a few shows, I can respect what I presume is your apprehension to do so. It just seems that the majority of HM readers might be missing out on the true beauty that encompasses his words and music. Regardless of how he chooses to label himself, he is still creating some of the most sincere music with Christian overtones. The questions relating to the doctrine of Perseverance of the Saints are applicable, no? P.S. My questions/comments never make the mag.
–Jeff Watkins, New Orleans, LA

Ed – There's a first for everything. We finally print a Jeff Watkins comment in the mag! We reviewed the new David Bazan album in the last issue, as I hope you have now seen. Someone commented on twitter that they were mad at HM, because we treated Bazan like he was dead. I disagree with that, as I do the review itself, which is why I rated the album higher than the writer did. A story would be cool, but we've got so much art vying for attention that we have to leave some out. My tendency lately, to be honest, is to favor the heavier styles when having to make these kinds of decisions.

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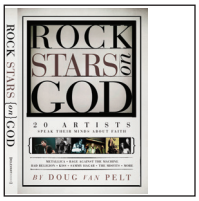

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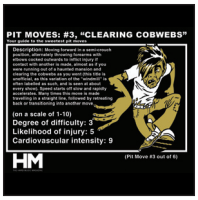

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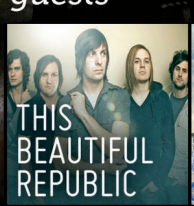

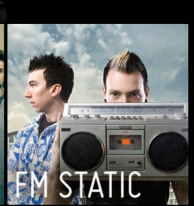

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